This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

150
M8
X
10/m

Samuel L. Quick Jr.

Nov. 5-1921

TOLD IN A CHINESE GARDEN

AND FOUR OTHER FANTASTIC PLAYS FOR OUT-DOORS OR IN-DOORS

BY
CONSTANCE WILCOX

Especially adapted for amateur productions

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1920

822.8
W667tw

COPYRIGHT, 1920,
BY
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

All of these plays have been successfully given.

No royalty is asked for performing rights when no admission is charged. Otherwise there is a charge of five dollars for each performance by amateurs. Professional actors must make special arrangements.

No performance of these plays may be given without full acknowledgment to the author and publishers. Acknowledgment should be made to read as follows: "By Constance Grenelle Wilcox; from Told In A Chinese Garden and Other Plays. Produced by arrangement with the publishers."

gift
D.L. Quirke
6-4-56

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
TO
MY FATHER

AUTHOR'S NOTE

These five one act plays have been written especially for the out of doors, and, as experience with them has shown, can be easily and effectively given by amateurs in the simplest of outdoor settings. They range in length and elaboration from "Told in a Chinese Garden," which plays forty-five minutes, and can be made, if desired, into quite a brilliant pageant for a large number of people, to "Pan Pipes," which is a play of twenty-five minutes for four actors. It is sometimes difficult to find plays exactly fitted for an outdoor setting. In these plays the entrances and exits are made with a view to outdoor production, and the background is taken into account. The particular settings given in the plays are, of course, not essential nor expected for any outdoor production. They are given for atmosphere, and in case of an indoor production. A few suggestions for simple production follow each play.

Permission for producing these plays can be obtained from the publishers.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
TOLD IN A CHINESE GARDEN A Play Pageant for a Garden		3
PAN PIPES	A Woodland Play	63
FOUR OF A KIND	A Play for a Boat	93
THE PRINCESS IN THE FAIRY TALE A Children's Garden Play		129
MOTHER GOOSE GARDEN A Fantasy for a Garden		171

TOLD IN A CHINESE GARDEN

TOLD IN A CHINESE GARDEN[1]

(A PLAY PAGEANT)

SCENE. *A Chinese garden.*
TIME. *A summer afternoon.*

CHARACTERS

TAI-LO, *A Gardener on the estate of Wang-Chu-Mo.*
POA-TING-FANG, *Guest of Wang-Chu-Mo.*
WANG-CHU-MO.
LI-TI, *Daughter of Wang-Chu-Mo.*
LING-TAI-TAI, *Governess to Li-Ti.*
LANG-TAI-TAI, *Governess to Li-Ti.*
TWO GUARDS.
SCRIBE.
PAGES, COOLIE RUNNERS *and* OTHERS.
(The Songs are all Old Chinese — and also the quotations)

[1] Copyright, 1919, by Constance Wilcox.

Mine is the secret land where spring
And sunset clouds cease wandering."

(POA-TING-FANG *and* WANG-CHU-MO *advance slowly down the path and into the garden. They are in gorgeous embroidered coats and scarlet and black hats with long tassels. A servant shields them from the sun with a bright, many-colored silk umbrella. They carry fans.*)

POA

(With a stately wave of his hand as they walk around the pool)

As I have frequently observed, a garden is soothing to the eye — the flowers are like the many-colored moving disks of the counting board as they shine in the sun — I was ever fond of a garden in which to prepare my accounts — so warm, so undisturbed —

WANG

I had learned of your Excellency's preference — and you will find that my daughter Li-Ti — your most subservient wife-to-be — has the history of each flower at her finger tips. I have had her trained four hours every day in this very garden so she may be able to recite for your Excellency's delectation when she walks her honorable wifely paths in your garden.

POA

Most erudite and solicitous host and father-in-law-to-be, the sun is no more warm on my back than your words in my ears. My late brother (may the Gods

grant him peace in heaven) took delight in his garden, and since I have come into his house and possessions, I have been pleased to add new blooms, one from each country, and cunningly intermingled like the enamel on a Ming vase. It is on view Thursdays and Saturdays — for a mean consideration.

(*They come upon the gardener. He bows so low that his sun hat completely hides his face; and, picking up his basket, he goes to a distant flower bed.*)

And gardeners — I have thousands — like brown-legged storks — and their wages — they will pick the pennies from my eyelids.

WANG

My daughter will have much to learn in your great household, and I have taught her to imbibe silently, and speak not until there are wise words in her mouth. As the Sage says, "A woman with a long tongue is a flight of steps leading to calamity."

POA

(*Picking a flower with a great air*)

I myself am a man of few words and many affairs.

WANG

Yes, again to quote: "Love of knowledge without the will to learn, casts the shadow called Instability. Love of goodness without the will to learn casts the shadow called Foolishness. Love —"

POA

Exactly, exactly. Now about the great scarlet bed that is part of your daughter's dowry — may I say that it is of an admirable richness and if there were silken quilts —

WANG

There — there are. They are to be carried to-night in the wedding procession on blue lacquered tables of great value — ten coolies it will take to carry them — and the household utensils and camphorwood chests —

POA

(*Jotting down the items in a notebook*)

Excellent, O excellent and generous, O my father-in-law-to-be. It is indeed fortunate that a propitious omen is about to bring our two great houses together. I would welcome your daughter were she as sharp as the vicious Aunt East Wind — which I am sure she is not.

WANG

My daughter is far from ill-favored. But as one has said, " Beauty without the will to —"

POA

It does not matter. It is of an insignificance. I remember too, " Admirable is the wise woman, but she is an owl." As befitting a man of affairs my wife and I will meet but seldom, and as you say she has the gift of silence. How does the verse go?

" The wise man's wisdom is our strength,

The woman's wisdom is our bane.
The men build up the city walls
For women to tear down again."

WANG

It rests my ears to hear that you are fond of poetry. Do you know —

POA

Ah, I remember the sequence,

"No man from any woman's wit
Hath yet learned aught of any worth,
For wise is she, but unto ill,
To bring disorder on the earth.
What does she in affairs of state?
Her place is in the inner room.
Her wisdom doth least hurt in this,
To mind the silkworm and the loom."

But enough of the arts. Were there not perhaps screens?

WANG

Of purple colored teakwood, set with silver and ivory, and hangings of orange brocade hand painted with dragons.

POA

A good omen — a good omen.

(They go off slowly talking.)

(A little boy in livery enters running. He peers about the garden and runs back to hold aside the shrubbery for a gilded, canopied chair

carried by coolies. In the chair is LI-TI, *her scarlet and gold gown stiff with embroidery, and her hair elaborately dressed and twisted with strings of jade and pearl. Long earrings frame a lovely, expressionless face, white with powder and vividly carmine on cheeks and lips. Her eyes are heavily black and droop wearily. She carries a peacock feather fan with a mirror in the handle. Behind the chair walk the two elderly governesses in drab-colored gowns as unprepossessing as their sharp yellowed faces. They carry rolls of manuscript and a servant behind holds a bright umbrella over them.*)

THE BOY

The garden is empty, Celestialness; only an under-gardener is here.

LI-TI

(*Peering out*)

My father and Poa-Ting-Fang were just walking through the paths. I wish I might catch a glimpse of them.

LING-TAI-TAI

It is not seemly.

LANG-TAI-TAI

It is not in comportment. It is curiosity!

(*The little procession advances slowly around the pool.*)

LANG

The five worst infirmities that afflict the female are

indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy and silliness. The worst of all and the parent of the other five is silliness. Your desire to see your honorable husband-to-be is silliness.

LING

Leave on the knees of the Gods the joy of your first sight of him. It comes soon enough.

(*The bearers set down the chair.*)

LI-TI

I have heard that he is old, and that he poisoned his brother so that he could take his estates, and that his brother's heir ran away from him.

LING

It is incredible that I hear these words in your mouth after our teaching.

LANG

Some sprouts do not blossom, some blossoms bear no seed. You are a stranger to us.

LI-TI

(*She descends from her chair. She is very small and sways on her bound feet*)

I am not myself. I am so soon to be some one else — the wife of a man that is old and greedy. I will drink only his will, and eat only his thoughts — he who I know poisoned his brother for money.

(*The bearers arrange a low stool for* LI-TI *and the little boy holds an umbrella over her. The governesses take their place standing in*

front of her and unroll their long yellow scrolls. They also have a boy to hold their umbrella. The bearers take off the chair.)

LING

Servants' chatter. Only girls and servants are hard to train. Draw near to them and they grow unruly; hold them off and they pay you with spite.

LANG

Remember that thou art young. What thou dost know is not to be compared with what thou dost not know.

LI-TI

It is common talk. Why then did his brother's only son and heir run away?

LING

Because he was a worthless ne'er-do-well and shamelessly preferred the freedom, as he called it, of vagabondage, to the honorable responsibility of his father's estate. That is common talk also.

LI-TI

Very like he did not care for the responsibility of such an uncle.

LANG

It ill fits your mouth to speak thus. If the shiftless Fang-Tai were to return and claim his lands before the allotted time when they legally belong to his uncle, you would not have a round penny as a wife.

LI-TI

Then my father would not have me be a wife at all. That would be pleasing.

LING

Undutiful girl! Let us go to our lessons.

(*They unroll the long strips of parchment.*)

LANG

Your parent has instructed us to impart one more lesson in the histories of the flowers before you go to your husband to delight him with your knowledge. Recite, I pray you, the complete ancestry of the marigold.

LI-TI

(*In a singsong*)

Fathered first by our lord the Sun, whose sevenfold beams falling on the plant wove into curling petals, and then the sweet West Wind in passing from the bazaars of the great spice grove scattered in a pinch of — of — cinnamon —

LING

Fie, fie — a pinch of musk.

LI-TI

A pinch of musk, and Ku-Wu the bee with the golden stripes fashioned for it in the heart of the flower a pouch of tiny petals — so now — so now — Will Poa-Ting-Fang, my future husband, be angry with me? I have forgotten what comes next.

LING

He will rap the tips of your fingers and leave you alone in the pavilion. "So now the musk—"

LI-TI

I do not know. Let us go to the gilly-flower. That is not so hard.

LING

Fie! What is it the great Sage says about those who take the easy path?

LI-TI

"The stones will be slippery and they will twist their feet."

LANG

So now the musk—

(*A runner enters who goes to the governesses.*)

RUNNER

The Lord Wang-Chu would confer with you in the inner courtyard on a matter of immediate importance.

LANG

We come at once.

LING

(*Thrusting a parchment into* LI-TI'S *hands*)

We return anon. Waste not the moments we are gone.

LANG

Listen not idly to the drone of the bees, or the dragonflies will sew up your ears.

LING

The list of the flowers is there. Read it well, and remember each in its place.

LANG

And there is the song of the willow flowers for the lute. Last time the notes sounded like a mouse on the strings.

(LING *and* LANG *go out with the runner and their umbrella man. The gardener crosses and begins work on the beds about the pool.*)

LI-TI

(*In a very small voice as she strums her lute*)

"O willow flowers like flakes of snow,
Where do your wandering legions go?
Little we care and less we know!
Our ways are the ways of the wind —
Our life in the whirl, and death in the drifts below."

(*She turns to her little umbrella boy, who stands patiently first on one leg and then on the other.*)

You twist so that your shadow flickers like a moth in the grass and drives the cadence out of my head. Go over there and rest — I do not mind the sun on my head.

(*He marches over to a far corner, and curling up on the ground under his umbrella promptly falls asleep.*)

LI-TI

(*Running a finger through her eyelashes*)

It is not seemly that he should see tears. (*She takes up the parchment.*) The green verbena is the herb that the willow nymph tried to crush into tea for her lover, and the fragrance of her hands — the fragrance of her hands — (*She buries her face in her hands.*)

TAI

(*Humming at his clipping*)

" Prone beside the Western stream,
In the lilied dusk I dream.
And mocking me the wind of spring
Such medley of perfume doth bring,
I cannot tell what fragrance blows,
Nor guess the lotus from the rose."

LI-TI

(*Standing up and looking across the flower beds*)

Who is it sings when I wish to be sad?

TAI

It is I — Tai-Lo, the gardener.

LI-TI

You are the gardener? Approach.

(TAI-LO *comes before her, basket on arm and bows low.*)

LI-TI

Why do you have so many different kinds of flowers in the garden?

TAI

So they will bloom as varied and bright as the hem of your celestial skirt that brushes them as you pass.

LI-TI

I would have all one kind — all gillyflowers.

TAI

The garden would be a desert — brown and yellow — deadening to the eye.

LI-TI

I would like it. There would be less to learn.

TAI

You know the flower lore and yet would have the heart to turn them out of their homes?

LI-TI

Horrid, stiff, prickly things! Take them up and put in gillyflowers!

(TAI-LO *kneels with his trowel and puts one or two plants in his basket.*)

LI-TI

(*As she watches him, she strums carelessly on her lute*)

" Through the green blinds that shelter me,
Two butterflies at play,
Four wings of flame whirl joyously
Around me and away,
While swallows breasting to the shore
Ripple the waves they wander o'er.
And I that scan the distant view,
Of torn white clouds and mountains blue —

TAI

(*Finishing it for her*)

Lift to the north my aching eyes —
'Tis there —'Tis there the city lies —
Chang — An arise! Arise! "

LI-TI

You know that, too?

TAI

I am an exile. I know another wanderer song that might please you. (*He takes the lute.*)

" I was a child in Yung-Yang,
A little child I waved farewell,
After long years I dwell again
In world forgotten Yung-Yang.
Yet I recall my playtime,
And in my dreams I see
The little ghosts of Maytime
Waving farewell to me.

" My father's house in Yung-Yang
Has fallen upon evil days,

No kinsmen o'er the crooked ways
Hail me as once in Yung-Yang.
No longer stands the old Moot hall,
Gone is the market from the town.
The very hills have tumbled down,
And stoned the valleys in their fall.
Yet I recall my playtime,
And in my dreams I see
The little ghosts of Maytime,
Waving farewell to me."

LI-TI

Do flowers have ghosts?

TAI

(*Returning to his work*)

Yes they are people. Poor little marigold lady! (*He holds up an uprooted plant.*) She holds the lanterns of the garden. When the nights are dark she lights up the thick green jungle so the katydids can dance.

LI-TI

(*She consults her paper*)

That is not what I learned about the marigold. It is much prettier.

TAI

Ah, what you know, my lady, is the allegorical ancestry, very befitting one of your quality. But this is the true story of the flowers that the fairies prick on the leaves. And the golden cup that the dew king fills for the moon fairies. They will go thirsty after their dance to-night.

LI-TI

You need not pull up so many. What is the little white flower by your foot?

TAI

They are the slippers of the firefly elves left out to dry in the sun, but you mustn't tell any one.

LI-TI

And those tall green ones over there?

TAI

Hush! Mandarins — see their green caps?

LI-TI

And how solemnly they nod their heads!

TAI

And how the bees fly in and out telling them state secrets.

LI-TI

O how dear and funny! (*She peers over towards the high flowers.*) I wonder if the bees' wings tickle their ears — they buzz so — I wonder how it feels to have a bee tell you secrets.

TAI

(*Gravely*)

I can show you. This is the way. (*He kisses her behind her fan.*) Are you angry, celestial lady?

LI-TI

No — o. It must be rather nice to be a flower.

TAI

You are one.

LI-TI

I consider you only as a bee — in the garden.

TAI

A poor sort of vagabond, accountable to no one — flying in and out — not ever staying long enough to care — or have any one care —

LI-TI

You shall stay and tell me funny stories.

TAI

All my poor little bee secrets are yours, lady.

LI-TI

And sing songs about — Yung-Yang. O, I wish I had known there was a bee in the garden before!

TAI

The bee saw the flower over the wall.

LI-TI

Oh — I should not have been chattering and behaving in this unseemly fashion. Here come my honorable governesses. They will be so displeased if I am not occupied in a fitting manner. Go and send over the umbrella boy. I hope I have not faded in the sun. (*She takes up her lute. The umbrella boy returns to stand over her.* TAI-LO *goes back to his work.*)

" O willow flowers like flakes of snow,
Where do your wandering legions go?
Little we care and less we know —"

(*She breaks off in a suppressed giggle that turns into a grave courtesy as the governesses hurry up. They are out of breath and excited.*)

LING

The unheard of has occurred!

LANG

O most unfortunate of girls!

LING

The house of Mo can never smile again!

LI-TI

What is the matter? In what have I offended?

LING

Not you. It is that the great Poa-Ting-Fang, your future husband-to-be, while walking in this very garden — O wretched landscape — has lost his emerald ring!

LANG

It is of the honorable size of a pigeon's egg, and worth the price of a thousand silver mines.

LING

More valuable than all your dowry.

LANG

It holds in its secret chamber the seal of his house cut from the tomb of his first ancestor —

LING

Never has one of his house been without it!

LANG

And it slipped from his august finger while he picked those miserable flowers!

LING

But that is not the most calamitous! He vows he will depart in anger — that he will never look upon your face — if his ring is not returned. It is an ill omen and the two houses cannot come together under it.

LANG

The garden must be searched to the very seeds, or you will be scorned as a bride and the world will laugh at our rejected house!

LI-TI

It does not appal me — that he will not marry me.

LANG

In this garden it vanished — the ring worth sixty diamond mines! It was to be a signet of your marriage. How can he overlook the omen of its loss?

LING

Who has seen it? Who? Who?

LI-TI

There has been no one here but ourselves — and the gardener.

LANG

That is it. O merciful heaven that has delivered him into our hands. (*They approach* TAI-LO *who bows.* LI-TI *wanders about looking in the beds.*)

LING

Your name?

TAI

Tai-Lo.

LANG

How long have you been here, and why did you come?

TAI

I have been gardener among your honorable flowers for twice seven days.

(LI-TI *stops to pick up something that glitters as she turns it in her hand.*)

LING

And before?

TAI

I wandered.

LANG

Ah!

LING

And your reason for coming?

TAI

(*Watching* LI-TI *as she stands in the sunlight*)
I liked the flowers in your garden.

LING

And you found them what you expected?

TAI

Better, excellencies. (*He bows.*)
(*With a furtive motion* LI-TI *crouches down and buries what she has found deep in the soft earth* TAI-LO *spaded up.*)

LING

Enough! Seize him!

LANG

"A flaw can be ground from a scepter white —
A slip of the tongue no man right."

LING

I am satisfied. "Unruly when young — unmentioned as man, undying when old — spells good-for-nothing."

LI-TI

(*Coming between them*)

No!

LANG

Your chair waits. In a moment your honorable father and the wronged Ting-Fang will be here to search the garden — and the gardener.

LI-TI

Untie him. He has not seen the ring.

LING

We shall see —

LANG

What we shall see.

TAI

There are ways of proving that I have not the ring.

LI-TI

(*She has ascended her chair. She twists her hands nervously*)

I — I — (*She looks at* TAI.) I will see that you are not found guilty.

TAI

Graciousness! "Richer the silver of your voice than in the hollow pojols that make moonlight about your ankles."

LING

"Honeyed words confound goodness."

LANG

"The vulgar always gloss their faults."

LING

Forward!

(*The bearers carry off the chair, followed by the governesses under their umbrella. A man stays to guard* TAI-LO.)

MAN

Where did you hide it?

TAI

What?

MAN

The ring.

TAI

I have not seen it.

MAN

I will take it safely out of the garden and we will go shares.

TAI

I tell you I have not seen it. It is fortunate for your master that I am gardener here instead of you.

MAN

Do you think I can believe you such a fool that you were working here on the very bed under his foot when the ring slipped from his finger and did not put your hand over it? Bah! Tell me where it is or I'll swear I saw you swallow it!

TAI

The only kind of fool I am not, is to tell anything to such a dirty knave as you.

MAN

(*Imperturbably*)

Everything you say will be used against you.

TAI

I have no doubt. "Trees are more upright than men."

MAN

"Money makes a blind man see."

(WANG-CHU-MO *and* POA-TING-FANG, *under their umbrellas, come into the garden. They are followed by servants with rakes.*)

WANG

(*Directing the men*)

Barely touch the surface of the earth — the slightest scratch may bury the ring beneath it as you work. And remember: you are held responsible if we fail. Oh, my honorable guest — and son-in-law that I hope you shall still be — would I could heap the unworthy dust of this garden on my head in apology.

FANG

It is indeed a calamity of unmitigated enormity. My ancestral jewel is of the size of a pigeon's egg and of the value of a thousand silver mines. (*He consults notebook.*) Whereas your daughter's dowry, I regret to say, does not possess its equivalent.

WANG

Its equivalent shall be found. Where is the gardener Lang-Tai-Tai told me of?

TAI-LO

Here.

(TAI-LO *and* POA-TING-FANG *stare at each other.*)

WANG

O wretched stork, what have you filched with your beak!

POA

I would question this man — alone.

(WANG *goes off, fussily directing the men who scratch the flower beds with their rakes.*)

POA

Fang-Tai!

TAI

My estimable uncle!

POA

What are you doing here?

TAI

I might better ask the same — what are *you* doing here — in my father's coat, and wearing — or, rather, being very careless, with my father's signet ring — while I, my father's heir, am still in a position to claim them? But I fear the question might inconvenience you —

POA

Very unsuitable.

TAI

We will let it pass since it is of my own free will that I wander. Be benign enough to assure these people that I am no thief and I say nothing.

POA

And how long do you continue saying nothing?

TAI

As long as my good pleasure and your good behavior.

POA

Am I to be at the beck and call and in constant fear of a paltry vagabond? Oh, my high-bred sensibilities! I shudder to my finger tips!

TAI

Most unsuitable of you, dear uncle. When my father died I chose some years of freedom to wander through the by-roads unhampered — and left you the freedom and the care of the estate. It was my favor that gave you these honors. It is not my fault if you assume too much — take too much — and force me to return.

POA

That was why you stole the ring — so that you could prove your estate instantly!

TAI

Your morals, my uncle, are odd. I take no such method.

POA

Bah! Hypocrisy!

TAI

I have seen that which makes me think I shall return in any case.

POA

Am I to give up my position — my hard-fought gains — my improvements won by the sweat of my toil and the clink of my gold —

TAI

My gold.

POA

To give place to you — you — a vagabond squanderer — a shiftless pleasure lover — who would waste and change and turn me into the laughing stock of the country?

TAI

No doubt.

POA

It is unthinkable — that *I*, — I should have to give way to a beardless ne'er-do-well. It is a thousand deaths! And I would give a thousand rings to have you dead, scourge of the worthy!

TAI

No doubt.

POA

You mock me — will you — monkey-eared frog — you —

TAI

Tell these people that I am no thief, and have done.

POA

They would not believe it,

TAI

I have around my neck the amulet, the duplicate of the sacred amulet in my father's ring. They will believe Tai-Fang.

POA

You cannot prove a grain of it. The amulet of a ragged gardener. It might be any stone.

TAI

The ring will be found and it fits there.

POA

I will throw the ring into the river before it is opened. I will grind it under my heel —

TAI

"The chase of gain is rich in hate —" My uncle, do you think there is a man on our estate who would not know me?

POA

But here — here they do not, and the word of a vagrant servant is the wind in the grass — empty. Whether the ring is found or not, I will say you confessed to stealing it. They will only be too eager to string you on the nearest branch to appease me. And what is one dead gardener more or less? By the sacred Gods that guard the cornice of our house, I will do it — unless you swear to go and never molest me again. You swear?

TAI

I do not.

POA

There will be trial and court in this very garden and you will be hung.

TAI

If it happens that I am not it will fare hard with you. How well I see now that "Gold is tested by fire and man by gold."

POA

You will never go out of that gate unless, when the rope is about your neck, you promise me on the grave of your ancestors —

TAI

You old thief! I'll see you strangled first! (*He tries to free his hands.*)

POA

(*Calling*)

My honorable father-in-law. This man is violent!

(WANG *hurries up.*)

WANG

He confesses?

POA

To having disposed of the ring. My astute questioning —

TAI

I do not.

WANG

Peace! Lest your tongue burn in your mouth.

POA

My intricate insinuations and subtle probes have brought the taste of guilt to his trembling mouth.

TAI

You lie! My Lord Wang, if you know —

WANG

(*Angrily*)

I am about to know.

POA

He admits to having taken the jewel but as to where he has hid it, he has the cunning and secrecy of the weasel.

WANG

We will discover at once. O that I should have nourished such a viper in my garden!

POA

Eating your bread and lining his unworthy pockets with your silver. My unhappy friend, I indeed grieve for you.

WANG

It can be crushed out. Tread on the snake's head, and he will not bite.

POA

I truly believe that nothing would give me greater happiness than to see your garden spot cleared of all evil.

WANG

O most felicitous and generous guest! Truly "to rank the effort above the prize may be called Love." It shall be cleared of Evil —

TAI

One moment.

WANG

Your time to speak shall come.

POA

He should have only one moment. I am sincerely convinced that such is my friendship for you that immediate removal of this rascal — since he has in part confessed — would greatly tend to smooth my pride in the matter of the ring — and my feeling towards your daughter —

WANG

We will hold a court at once.

POA

Is that necessary, in a case of such confessed guilt?

WANG

(*Pompously*)

"When not in office I discuss not policy." I perform no deed that is not strictly in accordance with the mandates of the law —" Gentlemen cherish worth; the vulgar cherish dirt. Gentlemen trust in justice; the vulgar trust in favor," says Confucius. But this will be very summary — just a few ceremonies in this garden — we will not disturb the festivities outside.

POA

Most laudable intention. But no strangers I pray — no fuss — no scandal; of all things I deplore scandal — and were there outsiders I would feel it my painful duty to explain — my emerald seal —

WANG

No one but ourselves — and the men in this garden — to act also as executioners in case —

POA

Exactly and excellently planned. Worthy father-in-law, your scheme is as neat as a snail in its shell.

TAI

I claim the right to defendants.

WANG

(*Pointing to the two guards*)

These can be your defendants. They are your fellow servants and know the most about you here.

POA

Precise as a crab in its skin.

TAI

Some one from my own province —

POA

Question not your master's generosity, wretched fellow. Your past is best buried in obscurity.

WANG

Unhappy man, the crime was committed here. Who more fitting than these witnesses?

POA

My father-in-law, the tea-leaf eyelids of the Sages would quiver at your perfect comprehension and justice.

TAI

You will regret this.

POA

Very like. I am tender-hearted and ever hate to witness suffering.

WANG

I depart to seek the law books. "To foster right among the people — to honor the ghosts of the dead while keeping aloof from them may be called Wisdom."

POA

For a theft of over a thousand gold pieces it is hanging, is it not? My ring was worth twenty thousand.

WANG

That is the penalty.

POA

And that this should defile your garden! In my grief for you I feel sorrow and desire for my ring passing away. Is it not dangerous to leave these men with the prisoner? He might confer falsely or even divulge the hiding place of the ring, and they escape.

WANG

True. Is he well tied?

GUARD

Perfectly. (TAI-LO *is roped hand and foot.*)

WANG

He is as safe there as a clipped sparrow, and we will guard the gates. Come, men, you will be allowed to confer with the prisoner for his defense under our eyes. Ah, if all would hark to the words of the Sage —"Living on coarse rice and water with a bent arm for pillow, mirth may be ours, but ill-begotten wealth and honors are to me a wandering cloud."

POA

We are not all born with the righteousness of Confucius in our breath as you are, my esteemed father-in-law-to-be.

(*They walk out slowly*)

GUARD

(*In* TAI-LO'S *ear*)

Tell me where it is — that ring —

TAI

You knave!

GUARD

Remember then — by Kong-Fu-Tsu, I'll say you swallowed it, and then — (*He makes the motion of ripping open* TAI'S *body with a knife.*) It is not pleasant even with a sharp knife — and I doubt if they wait to hang you first.

WANG

(*Calling*)

Come here, you loiterers!

GUARD

I was but tightening the ropes.

(*The* GUARDS *go out.*)

(LI-TI *enters on tip-toe. She sways, and advances very slowly. Suddenly, very swiftly, she stoops and feels in a flower bed.* TAI-LO *whistles a little tune.*)

LI-TI

(*Her hands behind her*)

You are spying on me! Oh!

TAI

If you move your celestial path to another circle, I cannot see you.

LI-TI

Oh, poor gardener — you are bound! Does it hurt!

TAI

A little, but not so much as that you should see me so.

LI-TI

You do look funny! Ah, I did not mean that — I will see that you are unbound. I want to hear you talk again. I hate to see you so. Can't you move?

TAI

My position is honorably uncomfortable. Your

august father is pleased to accuse me of taking your estimable husband-to-be's ring.

LI-TI

But you did not. They were estimably in the *wrong.*

TAI

You believe I did not steal? Your words are as sweet as the song of the Fung-Noang, the wonder-birds.

LI-TI

Would it free you if the ring were found? If the emerald the size of a pigeon's egg and the value of sixty pagodas of pearl were to be spaded up in this flower-bed?

TAI

I am afraid not.

LI-TI

It would not matter?

TAI

You are pleased?

LI-TI

Oh, it is only a little matter — something to do with myself, and not at all important as your troubles are. It is only that if the ring were not found, I heard it said that Poa-Ting-Fang — my husband-to-be — would look upon me with frowning, and not take me to his house, but go away.

TAI

You do not want to marry him?

LI-TI

I have heard that he is old and ugly and stupid, and likes dry things to learn by rote instead of — of knowing nice pretty flower stories such as —

TAI

As I know?

LI-TI

Yes. But I must not take up all the time with this idle chatter of my affairs. There must be found a way to free you and then the ring will never be found. Oh, I would stamp it to pieces myself rather than that, and I would never have to learn any more stupid lists for Ting-Fang — only funny flower stories here in the garden with you, and we would be so happy and carefree. Wouldn't we?

TAI

It would be as a thousand springtimes. I wish it were possible.

LI-TI

Why not?

TAI

You yourself have poured water on the last spark of hope.

LI-TI

You think the ring could free you after all?

TAI

If anything. But speak not of that.

LI-TI

I must (*in a very faint voice*); and the ring shall be found.

TAI

I hope not, for your honorable sake. You will stay in the garden and talk to the bright lilies, and all the wicked lacquered goblins on the cornice of the house of Ting-Fang shall wriggle their fire-colored tongues in vain, for they shall not have you to eat.

LI-TI

But I should not like it if you were not here.

TAI

You think so? To-night even in the great citron light of sunset when the Three Councillors open their cold bright eyes in the Northern sky, you will have forgotten.

LI-TI

No! Your ghost would come to me.

TAI

Do not fear for me. "Those who have not tasted the bitterest of Life's bitters can never appreciate the sweetest of Life's sweets." And even if the emerald should be found growing like a celestial magic leaf upon these flower stems, there are those to say I hid it, and that is theft confessed.

LI-TI

But if some one else were to say he took it?

TAI

O jewel in the lotus, do you think others wait to hang in my stead?

LI-TI

(*Slowly*)

I could not live, and think that I had harmed you.

TAI

That is very kind.

LI-TI

You do not believe me? It is true!

TAI

Did you not just say, Almond Flower, that it was your happiness for the ring not to be found? That is proof.

LI-TI

When I think of going with that dreadful old man, it is like holding my hand in a crab's tooth. But a way will be found to free you. It must.

TAI

To argue with you, little one, is like throwing water in a frog's face.

LI-TI

Oh, you are so funny! Have I a face like a frog?

TAI

More like a lotus petal.

LI-TI

Ah, I cannot bear it! I must tell you — it is a secret —

TAI

Tell me. The dead have no tongues to wag.

LI-TI

Don't say it! Tai-Lo, you are not going to die!

TAI

That is nonsense. What is your secret?

LI-TI

It is that I — Oh, I dare not — I cannot — (*She hides her face behind her fan.*)

TAI

Your esteemed father and his honorable guest your husband-to-be are approaching. It would not be seemly that they find you in converse with a prisoner.

LI-TI

(*Looking up steadily over her fan*)

Good-by. Tai-Lo.

TAI

Good-by.

(LI-TI *vanishes in the bushes.*)

(WANG-CHU-MO *and* POA-TING-FANG *enter, followed by servants bearing two high gilded chairs. Two others carry parasols, and another books, papers, and a long quill pen. One man has a heavy rope slung over his arm. At*

a reasonable distance the two governesses follow, whispering importantly under their umbrella. The bearers put down the chairs and WANG *and* POA *ascends them, the umbrellas being held over their heads. A scribe sits cross-legged at their feet, with his materials spread before him. The governesses stand behind* WANG'S *chair, and the servants in a row behind* POA'S. WANG *motions for* TAI-LO *to be unbound. He comes to stand in front of the chairs.*)

WANG

(*Reading from a book*)

"To leave untaught and then kill is cruelty; to ask full tale without warning is tyranny. To give careless orders and be strict when the day comes is robbery; to be stingy in rewarding men is littleness." Court is open. This man is accused of a theft surpassing the mark of ten thousand gold pieces. I being judge of this province may acquit him, or find him guilty. If he is found guilty, he may be hanged.

POA

(*Fanning himself*)

Most suitable, most suitable.

WANG

Who stands against this man?

POA

(*Rising*)

I do.

(*Several of the servants bow, and the governesses come forward timidly.*)

WANG

(*Speaking to the* SCRIBE)

Put down the names.

POA

Of us all —

WANG

Yes, all except those two. (*He points to the two guards of* TAI-LO.) They are to speak for the prisoner.

POA

(*Coldly*)

Ah, those. (*He leans over to them.*) Merely technical, my men, I assure you. There will be no penalty attached for you if your — ah — client — is found guilty.

TAI

I will speak for myself.

GUARD

(*In his ear*)

And what have you to say to me?

TAI

That you can go to the devil.

(*The guard whispers vindictively.*)

TAI

You blackguard! (*He falls on the man, half knock-*

ing him down, and is pulled back by the other guard. WANG *and* POA *both rise. The governesses scream.*)

WANG

(*Shrilly*)

Stop it there! How dare you, vagrant beetle that you are, interrupt and insult the honor of the court before my eyes! Oh, lamentable viciousness!

POA

Scandalous!

WANG

(*Sinking back in his chair, the guards having pulled* TAI-LAO *back*)

An execrable beginning.

POA

Contemptible. To maul his very fellow defendant!

TAI

It is not as you think, Lord Wang; if you will hear me, this man —

POA

Out of order. (*Fanning.*) Tales, tales.

WANG

Out of order, certainly! and there is nothing to excuse your incredible actions. "The people are the root of a country, if the root is firm, the country will be tranquil; if the root is rotten, the country breaks like a house with a cracked floor."

GUARD

I refuse to answer for this man. I want to accuse him —

POA

Very proper spirit, very proper.

GUARD

I can tell you —

WANG

All in appropriate time. Put his name down there. (*He raps sharply on the arm of his chair with his fan.*) Proceed! We will omit the formalities and come to the accusations.

SCRIBE

(*Reading from his papers in a high singsong*)

The gardener, Tai-Lo, is accused of theft in the third degree of —

POA

Time presses.

WANG

Come to the list of evidence.

SCRIBE

First: He was known to be alone in the garden when the great and honorable Lord Poa-Ting-Fang lost his most precious emerald ring — clear as the sunset after rain — of the size of a pigeon's egg — and the value of ten thousand silver mines. He was seen to work under the very feet of the great Poa-Ting-Fang as the ring slipped from his finger —

TAI

If he knew when it fell, why did he not pick it up?

WANG

Again, silence.

POA

Note that down — if he knew — if he knew. (*Making a note in his book.*)

SCRIBE

Second: He confessed openly to have been a wandering beggar and questionable character before his entering as a gardener only a few days before the notable Poa-Ting-Fang was due for a visit, and he admitted in the access of his unworthy triumph that he had found the gleanings of the garden even more than he had expected.

LING

That we found out —

LANG

He admitted it to us.

POA

Most admirable example of female intelligence!

LING

(*To* LANG, *as they settle back*)

"A man thinks he knows, but a woman knows better."

SCRIBE

Third: The guilty one is known to have confessed

to taking the ring — into the august ear of Poa-Ting-Fang himself.

POA

Is that not sufficient?

SCRIBE

Though, being as a weasel in his ways, he will not confess where he has hid away the jewel. (*He rolls up his paper, and sits down.*)

TAI

Poa-Ting-Fang has made my confession incomplete because he does not know any more than I do where the ring is.

POA

Does the court permit this slander on my person?

WANG

We will hear the man though his ridiculous insinuations are hardly worth the attentions of our august ear. "But he who contains himself goes seldom wrong," says the wise man. We will listen though it be wind in our ears.

POA

"Politeness before force."

TAI

I have not seen the ring.

POA

That is an — ah — inaccuracy. The person has seen the jewel on this very hand, flashing in the sun

before his greedy eyes — as I walked in the garden. Could any one have overlooked the sacred emerald of the house of Fang? Of the value of five hundred Ming vases all fragile as the wings of a moth? His statement is worthless.

TAI

Yes, my uncle, my esteemed and proud relative, I have seen the ring — on my father's finger it was — my father — whose estates you will steal to your own ends — seen it with my eyes — the eyes of Fang-Tai — my father's son.

POA

His guilt has gone to his head. Too bad, too bad. "Memory makes dizzy his thought like the perfume of some venomous flower."

WANG

What proof have you for this monstrous impertinence?

TAI

"When a bird is to die his note is sad, when a man is to die, his words are true." Do you deny that I am your nephew, Lord Ting-Fang?

POA

Most certainly. My Lord Wang-Mo, do you permit this man to question whether I know my own nephew? Indeed "if the tongue have no fear, words are hard to make good."

WANG

Consider which way your tongue goes. How can you utter such an assertion?

POA

"The charioteer of Resolve has lost control of the wild team of Fancy."

GOVERNESSES

(*Behind their fans*)

Very pretty — very pretty.

(POA *smiles indulgently.*)

TAI

(*Holding out an amulet that is a string about his neck*)

I have here the perfect duplicate of the sacred amulet of the house of Fang, the secret seal of our ancestors, given only to the first sons of our house.

POA

Very unlikely.

TAI

And any man from our province would know me — I can tell you the secret and inmost furnishings of our palace —

POA

The man must have a whole band of accomplices to lie for him.

GOVERNESSES

"Evil is not hermit. It has ever neighbors."

POA

Exact and just.

TAI

Do you deny, Poa-Ting-Fang, that in the hidden corner of your chamber —

POA

Whose word is to be taken — this vagabond's or mine? Are my household gods to be dragged out and shamed before the whole countryside — and in the mouth of every lying rascal? I have said that he is a thief. My word is used as carelessly as a lead penny. (*He rises.*) This court shall keep me no longer. I will go forth, and say that it is no court.

WANG

My most exalted guest, your word is as valuable as a ruby. Into a court is sifted both chaff and grain. We must winnow all. Be satisfied that the affair will be settled here — and take it no further. (POA *seats himself.*)

POA

(*Sulkily*)

" Long visits make short compliments."

WANG

You have an amulet?

POA

Like most gardeners — apes are we all.

GOVERNESSES

Yes, yes, apes.

WANG

Speak slowly — and take heed of your words — concerning it. The offense is great. How can you prove your assertion here and now?

TAI

The amulet is cut so cunningly that it fits into a hidden part of the ring of our house.

POA

And the ring is lost! Very neat, very neat.

WANG

You testify to your own guilt.

TAI

I dare you to find the ring, Poa-Ting-Fang.

GUARD

He can't do it! He can't do it!

WANG

Why not?

GUARD

(*Pointing to* TAI-LO)

Because he's swallowed it!

ALL

Swallowed it!

TAI

That — that is too absurd!

GUARD

(*Vindictively*)

When he knew he was caught — he did it — to hide his guilt —

TAI

And how do you prove that?

GUARD

(*Significantly*)

There is one way to prove it — quick and sure.

WANG

This is most distressing!

POA

Most shocking to my delicate sensibilities —

GUARD

Will you hang him first? My Lord, does such a liar deserve it?

POA

Perhaps the guard is right — and since the man claims to exalted ancestry, however knavish his assertions, that is a more — ah — aristocratic way of — ah committing suicide. But, oh, my tender perceptions.

WANG

I must complete my duty and the law.

GUARD

(*Delightedly producing a knife in one hand and a rope in the other*)

Have I your august permission to —

(*The bushes part suddenly and* LI-TI *appears.*)

LI-TI

(*Shrilly*)

No!

WANG

My daughter!

POA

My future bride! (*He modestly hides his face behind his fan.*)

WANG

This is the culmination of unseemliness! Unhappy girl!

LI-TI

(*Prostrating herself*)

I will walk in obedience all my life. I will be faithful and light lanterns before all the household gods, and obey your slightest eyelid quiver as your most subservient and unworthy wife, my Lord Ting-Fang, but I cannot live and know that such a crime was done in my name.

WANG

In your name?

LI-TI

Oh, a thousand pardons, most august and best of

fathers — ten thousand, O most exalted husband-to-be — but I with my miserable eyes had never beheld the countenance of my Lord Ting-Fang — and knew that he could care naught for one so lowly as I — and I found — O, a million apologies, most celestial ones — that my unworthy heart was not with him — that it lay in the hand of another — and when I heard — from all mouths that my Lord Ting-Fang would not have me if his ring were not found — I thought only of myself in my unhappiness — and I saw the ring where it lay fallen in our most unworthy garden, slipped from his august finger — and I stole it.

WANG

You!

LI-TI

Yes. Cover me with a thousand confusions. Bury me forever in the cold cells of the sacred Pagoda. But do not harm Tai-Lo. (*She holds out her hand.*) Here it is.

POA

(*Coming suddenly down from his chair*)

Let me see.

TAI

(*Forestalling him, and covering the ring with his hand*)

No.

LING

(*Catching a sleeve of* LI-TI *and pulling her back*)

Little spider — is this how you reward our teaching!

LANG

(*Pulling her by the other sleeve*)

"The five worst infirmities that afflict women are—"

WANG

Peace.

TAI

Behold; my Lord Wang. (*He holds the ring and his amulet together in his hand.*)

WANG

Complete. How strange indeed are the Gods!

TAI

There will now be time to prove more—

POA

(*With a majestic wave of his hand*)

My worthy and honorable Lord Wang-Chu-Mu, and others that are here, I admit that this person is unfortunately my nephew. I admit that I denied him before you. I admit that I would rather have my tender, high-strung sensibilities racked to their core as they would have been by the shedding of my own flesh and blood and the thrice regrettable demise of my unfortunate nephew than to have the lands of my ancestors ravaged and the gods of my household profaned by falling into the hands of a profligate and a waster. But through the interruption of, I may say with a blush, your unmaidenly daughter, all this cannot be. But the hem of my skirt will be clear of it from now on. I resign my lands into the hands of

this rascal, preferring that they perish quickly and without the open scandal of a lawsuit with such as he. And you, Wang-Mu, I congratulate you that you have not had the inconvenience of having your daughter returned to you, as she surely must have been had I seen her in my house. I leave her to my nephew. I fear they are only too well suited to each other. I have the pleasure of bidding you an honorable farewell. And try, I beg you, though I fear it will be difficult, to remember that " A gentleman is consistent and changeless and a combination of art and nature well blent."

(*He moves off with great dignity, signing to a man to follow him with an umbrella. All bow.*)

WANG

Alas! Like the famous man, " He wears a mask of love but his deeds belie it."

LING

Such a splendid creature!

LANG

Like the full moon his face, with eyebrows like swallows' wings —

TAI

My uncle has always dignity and discretion.

WANG

Completely polite.

(POA-TING-FANG *disappears.*)

TAI

May I have the honor of suggesting that I am now as my uncle — though undoubtedly somewhat less august and complete in my gifts — and stand in the most exalted shoes of your son-in-law-to-be?

WANG

I will consult the law upon that most desirable point. My garden is yours, and my house — and all that I have.

(*He goes off slowly, followed by the scribe, chair and the others. All bow deeply.*)

TAI

(*To* LI-TI)

So that was your secret?

LI-TI

(*Prostrating herself*)

Oh, most honorable lord, forgive my boldness.

TAI

(*Lifting her to him*)

You would have sacrificed yourself so no harm should come to me. It gives faith to a poor vagabond to take up the works of his ancestors again.

(*The bearers come back with* LI-TI'S *chair. She ascends it.*)

TAI

I shall remember that the first day I saw you was the birthday of a thousand flowers, and each succeeding day will be the unfolding of a new petal.

LI-TI

Oh, most honorable one! I will have no more secrets from you — I will tell you all.

TAI

In a garden — where there are plenty of bees. (*He bows. The bearers carry off her chair.* LING *and* LANG *follow.*)

(*As the chair reaches the opposite of the pool* LI-TI *leans out and throws him a kiss.* TAI-LO *follows them out slowly, humming the same tune as when he first came into the garden.*)

FOR OUTDOOR PRODUCTION

OF

TOLD IN A CHINESE GARDEN

Any garden could be used for this play.

To make it appear Chinese, large flat gray silhouettes, cut to represent the stone lanterns and pagoda ornaments so often seen in Chinese gardens could be easily made, and placed about.

It is pretty to have a little walk or vista down which the processions can come on entering the garden. The bright colored costumes are very effective against the green.

For amateur production, Chinese costumes and properties are easy to find, and the coolie costumes can be very effective with soft colored smocks and peaked straw hats.

FOR INDOOR PRODUCTION

A simple scene would be —

A white wall extends across the back of the stage, with a little red door let in on one side, through which the characters enter into the garden. The top of the wall is colored with a band of scarlet, blue and gold tiles, and perhaps the curving scarlet tip of a Chinese roof shows over the top of the wall against the vivid blue sky. The grass in the garden is very bright green, with a little pebble path running through it, and prim flower beds against the wall, and in the foreground, brilliant, stiff flowers. On either side, stunted, Chinese pines, in lacquered pots. For ornament, two red lacquered sitting Chinese dogs guarding the door in the wall.

PAN PIPES

A Woodland Play

PAN PIPES[1]

A Woodland Play

Scene. *A wooded hillside.*
Time. *A summer afternoon.*

CHARACTERS

Harry, *of the Luxurio Stores.*
Clare, *his fiancée.*
A Nymph.
The Faun.

[1] Copyright, 1919, by Constance Wilcox.

PAN PIPES

(A Fairy Tale)

THE scene is an open hillside with long grass, sunlit and rippling in the wind. On either side woodland encroaches with old gray trees and thick twisted undergrowth. A gnarled oak stands out a little by itself, against a blue and white sky. A shrill piping is heard to drift across from the wood. It is high and eerie and suddenly melts into silence.

HARRY *and* CLARE *appear from the back over the curve of the hillside.* HARRY *is a stocky youth in the latest of pink shirts and black and white check trousers. He carries his coat over his arm and fans himself with a very new straw hat. His face is red and hot and his dark hair plastered in a wet straggle over his forehead.* CLARE *is a tiny creature in bright green, her hands thrust in the sagging pockets of her sweater. She is capped with a turned up black and green silk sport hat. Under its close brim her hair puffs out each side of her pointed face, a bright straw yellow. She is quite pale but gives the effect of color because of her incessant motion.*

HARRY

(*Puffing*)

Nobody here. I said as there wouldn't be.

CLARE

Oh, let's go just a bit further, Harry. It's such larks, exploring. And I'm sure I heard something — a sort of whistling like.

HARRY

Wish it was an umpire's whistle. No such luck. Well, it couldn't be no hotter on the bleachers than it is here. Believe me.

(*He wipes his forehead with a pink handkerchief*)

And stiller'n the tombs at that.

CLARE

(*Looking about*)

I guess maybe it was just a locust I heard. But it's greener up here than it was down there somehow. Oh, it is pretty!

HARRY

(*Wading forward in the grass*)

Bugs and grass. That comes cheap. This is the rummest excursion the Luxurio Stores ever put across since I've been handlin' their taffetas. Lordy. Barefoot dancin' by a gang of high brows in a Jersey sidetrack. Lordy. (*He reaches the oak and stands panting in its shade.*)

CLARE

(*With a little twirl*)

They were class. Mrs. Gethem says they was — was nymphs, she said, in the real Greek colors.

HARRY

Cheesecloth. Dyed. Fifteen a yard — wholesale.

CLARE

(*With a toss of her head*)

You're so bourgeoise, Harry. It's all the go these separate dances. It was a dance to Pan they was doin', the professor man told me. It looked like lots of fun. (*She takes a light step or two.*) You go just where you feel like. (*She twinkles her fingers as she whirls, as if playing a Pan's pipe.*) It comes natural. Isn't that pretty? (*Her hat falls off. She catches it, and turns suddenly.*) There — you clapped your hands.

HARRY

(*Fanning himself with his hat*)

I did not. Give me a jazz fox-trot every time. Not but what you've got 'em all tied to a standstill for looks, Clare. Always had. I picked some winner for my best girl.

CLARE

(*Coming towards him, puzzled*)

Some one did clap their hands.

HARRY

(*Carefully spreading his coat on the grass under the oak*)

Some of the poor ginks back there applaudin' an encore of the dyed cheesecloth and bare feet to get a drag with the boss and his professor friend. Not for mine. (*He sits down on the coat and pats the grass beside him.*) If I've got to go to grass I prefers to pick my company.

CLARE

(*Dropping down quickly, beside him, her hat in her lap*)

I like the grass. I do. And it smells simply wonderful. It's great up here — just you and me in the sun and green —

HARRY

(*Patting her hand*)

Here's to it. But no fresh air fund stuff for yours truly. Coney has the same green effect with good little old railways running through it. Zip-wow —

CLARE

(*Pulling away with a little laugh. She spills over backwards on the grass*)

Oh — and I'd just rather roll down this hill!

HARRY

What's eatin' you? Want a little cheesecloth dress to caper with the rest of the bosses' highbrow entertainers? Some little annual picnic. Lordy. They're all crazy as katydids. And now you've got 'em.

CLARE

(*Kneeling in the grass, arranging her rumpled tousel of straw colored hair*)

There's lots of things different from what you and I have always known. The store — and Coney — and the movies —

HARRY

Not forgettin' some future manœuvers with furniture on the instalment.

CLARE

(*Busy with her hair*)

There's other things. When we're all hustlin' in the city with so many people and houses about I don't hear 'em. But up here. (*She looks about.*) It's as if my mind just started talkin' to me because everythin' else was so still. There's lots of things we don't know about, Harry.

HARRY

I'd just as soon do without. If the bare foot trippin' about we was brought up here to enjoy's a sample.

CLARE

(*Staring*)

What's that you're sitting against, Harry?

HARRY

(*Shifting, and revealing a squarish boulder, lichen-covered and worn with time*)

A stone. Look out or you'll give me the jumps.

CLARE

(*Intently, as she moves near*)

It's — it's squarish, isn't it — and flat on top — and oh — it's got sort of marks on its sides.

HARRY

See here. The sun's gone to your head. Put on your hat.

CLARE

(*With a laugh as she jumps up and runs to the stone*)

Oh, it is. I'm sure it is — one of those stones the

professor was telling us about. He said there used to be lots about the hills — altar stones to Pan, he called them. Funny square stones with a little scoop in the top to catch the rain — look, here it is —

HARRY

(*Edging away nervously*)

Well, what of it? Why didn't the precious dancers gyrate about this if it was so grand? I guess it was too blooming hot for them. (*He yawns.*)

CLARE

(*Excitedly, as she balances herself on the stone*)

They would have if they'd known it was here, I guess. That was who they was dancin' to — Pan.

HARRY

(*Stretching himself*)

Who's he?

CLARE

But the professor says nobody knows just where these stones will be or who put them here — that's the fun of it. Only — only sometimes people used to think Pan did it. He was a sort of god, you know — big and strong with hoofs like a goat, and lives in the woods —

HARRY

(*Sleepily*)

Bunk.

CLARE

They — they said he used to come and drink out

of the rain water in the hollow and after that the water was magic. Oh look! There's some here now! (*She dips her finger in it.*)

HARRY

Bunk.

CLARE

But think what fun to have believed it. Oh — I'm sorry I can't believe it, too. I'm sorry they're nothing but fairy-tales. Don't laugh, Harry.

HARRY

(*Who has slumped down on the other side of the tree, and is now preparing for a nap*)

I didn't laugh. I wasn't that entertained. (*He rolls up his coat and thumps it into a pillow.*)

CLARE

(*Indignantly, slipping off the stone*)

You did laugh. I heard you.

HARRY

When you come to, wake me. (*He turns over.*)

CLARE

(*Stamping*)

Oh, sleep if you want to be so stupid. You're a pig. Nothing but a big pink pig! (*She shoves him with her foot.*)

HARRY

(*Sitting up sulkily and looking very like what she just called him*)

Say, I guess you're just a little bit above yourself.

Ain't you, Clare? You have been ever since we come into this silly wood. It ain't anything that's the matter with your old Harry? Is it? You know I couldn't breathe much if I thought that. (*He pulls her wrist.*)

CLARE

No. Of course not. It's just— (*She hammers on the grass with one fist*) that you don't understand.

HARRY

Now what don't I?

CLARE

Oh — just how I like the — the grass and the sun and everything. I could eat it.

HARRY

(*Running his fingers through his hair*)

It makes me sick. It does. It's enough to turn the gall of any straight American. That's what comes of taking decent people out to see these new fool fandangle idiotic dances in the woods — to Gods what never was anyhow and least of all here.

CLARE

Oh, they were — they were — It's not just the country. It's not just Jersey or Greece or any place. They were everywhere where there were woods.

HARRY

Yes — and what do you get out of the woods? Ant bites and dirt, and maybe a day's picnic that would be a lot cleaner in good little old Coney. Or maybe you'd

like to be a farmer's wife? I guess you know what that means all right. They ain't overfond of the sun and woods what's all around 'em. What would the country do for us? Put us in the hobo class in a month. Leave the nature fakin' to the idle rich what has automobiles to carry 'em away from it. Don't you get your head turned by no high-brow picnic the boss gives us all — and a rotten slow one too if you ask me. (*He subsides towards his coat pillow.*) No back-woods life for us.

CLARE

But there must be some way of just — enjoyin' it.

HARRY

(*Recumbent*)

There ain't no way. Flies — mosquitoes — hornets — dust and five miles to the nearest corner. Lordy. Lordy. And hard on the feet — (*He shoves up one yellow oxford-clad foot and surveys it.*) I'm completely busted. Say, Clare, you don't mind if I do take a little snooze? This country life is rougher on me for half a day than six months trampin' the aisle at the Stores — and no raise in sight here either. I'll just rest up a minute here. You run along if you like and see some more of the boss' bare foot entertainers — or get in with your friend the professor what planned the boss' treat. Treat! Lordy!

CLARE

(*As he settles comfortably down*)

No-o. I'll stay here — and keep off the hornets — (*She fans with his hat.*)

HARRY
(*Drowsily*)

Good little Clare.

(*He sleeps. She continues to fan gently, and then drops the hat slowly into her lap, and clasps her hands on it, looking out over the field.*)

(*There comes suddenly the shrill quick piping from the wood. It stops.*)

CLARE
(*Sitting up on her heels, and pushing back her hair*)

Oh — Yes?

(*The piping comes again louder — and stops as suddenly as before. There is a slight crackling in the wood.*)

CLARE

Who is it? (*She peers into the wood. Silence.*) Who is it? Harry — did you hear that?

(HARRY *turns over with a soft grunt. He is dead asleep.*)

(*The piping sounds again very sharply. There is a crashing in the undergrowth — and then a laugh.*)

CLARE
(*Starting to her feet*)

Oh! That was what laughed before. (*She shivers.*)

(*Suddenly with a breaking of undergrowth a girl tears out from the wood. She is very slight with thin brown arms and legs twinkling*

from a bluish green shift, and dark hair flying out behind her. She stumbles on a root as she comes into the open, recovers her balance and flies over the ground. Her face is twisted back over her shoulder and she is gasping with terror. She collides suddenly with CLARE — *leaps back and then grasps her again.*)

GIRL

Quick. Run. Quick. He's close behind. Quick. (*She drags at* CLARE.)

CLARE

Who is?

GIRL

(*Pulling her along in an agony of haste. There comes further crackling from the bushes she has just left*)

Oh — hurry. Hurry. He'll have us both. It's Glaucos the Faun. He's there — and he's seen us.

CLARE

(*Holding her arm*)

Oh, you're one of the dancers. What's the matter?

GIRL

(*Freeing herself with a frantic jump*)

I must get back to my tree. I must. I shouldn't have come out — but I thought there were others. Oh, he's close here. Stop him. Stop him!

(*She bolts across the hill into the wood on the other side, just as* THE FAUN *crashes out of the wood behind.*)

CLARE

Here. Stop there. Stop! (*She gets right in the way of* THE FAUN *who is running head down. He recoils from the collision.*) Aren't you ashamed of yourself, chasing about like that!

(THE FAUN *recovers his balance, and with a sudden lurch seizes her in his arms.*)

THE FAUN

Syrinx!

CLARE

(*Freeing herself with such a violent wrench that* THE FAUN, *taken unawares tumbles suddenly backwards*)

How dare you! I'm not Syrinx!

THE FAUN

(*Who has only bounded down like a rubber ball, and is now crouched tense, in the grass looking up at her*)

No? Not Syrinx? What are you then?

CLARE

(*Angrily*)

I'm Miss Clare Flaxon of the Luxurio Stores, and there's my fiancé there, Harry Markem. I guess he'd like to wake up and see you treating me like that! We came out on the store's annual picnic and we saw you dancing, but I don't think the boss would have much to say to you if he saw you chasing about this way.

THE FAUN

(*Speculatively*)

I'll get her yet. (*He grins and looks at the wood opposite.*) The minx!

CLARE

How could you chase the poor young lady so! Even if it was all play-acting — she looked really scared. You frightened her out of her wits.

THE FAUN

(*Rising*)

Frightened! Was ever creature so absurd! She loves it. The chase. The wind in her face. The excitement. The scant breath. She lives for it!

CLARE

She looked just exhausted to me. And I should think she would be with all that dancing down there in the glade — and all the encores we gave them.

THE FAUN

What! (*He stares and then drops suddenly backward on the grass and rolls about with shrieks of laughter.*) Oh, you thought her one of those dancers in the glade — one of those splay footed — clumsy — heavy imitations. Oh, I shall die of laughter. You thought her one of those creatures who hopped about before people. Oh! OH! (*He sits up suddenly still shaking with mirth, and points a finger at* CLARE.) Oh, if she should hear it! She would strangle you in a tree crotch, or bury you alive in running water. (*He bowls over again with laughter.*)

CLARE

I don't see anything so funny. What is she then? A prima-donna?

THE FAUN

(*Sitting up on his haunches*)

She is Cloris the nymph and her home is the birch tree. And I — (*He stands up and stretches to his full height.*) I am Glaucos the Faun. (*He is a splendid brown creature with shaggy legs and a vivid beautiful face. He wears a vine wreath in his rough dark curls and a pan's pipe slung over his bare shoulders.*)

CLARE

(*Retreating a step*)

Oh — you look like — Pan.

THE FAUN

Don't speak sacrilege — Syrinx — I am only a faun.

CLARE

Who — who are you?

THE FAUN

I have told you. The Faun, Glaucos. The dweller in the hazel thickets.

CLARE

You — you frighten me somehow. (*She smiles uncertainly.*) But I suppose it's only your funny way. (*She glances at the sleeping* HARRY *to reassure herself.*) Every one must have his fun.

THE FAUN

Yes! Every one must have his fun. So I came out to-day. Oh, and it has been fun! Those dances

in the glade by those fat imitations! I nearly split my sides. (*He laughs.*)

CLARE

You're as bad as Harry. I thought they were very pretty. So graceful and soothing sort of. It's a pity there aren't any more nymphs and — and fauns really to dance. It would be nice. I'm kind of sorry there aren't any.

THE FAUN

(*Creeping towards her*)

Oh, aren't there? Aren't there any? Who is it runs through the woods at night? You can hear the thud of their feet on the dead leaves. Who is it has just left the undergrowth all trembling as you enter it? Who laughs in your ear when you are alone on the hills? Who watches from behind tree trunks, and splashes just a little way up the brook? Who stole those who went into the woods and never came out? What was it you saw running in the fields at twilight? (*His face is thrust close into hers.*)

CLARE

(*Recoiling*)

Oh, don't! I'm afraid. Oh! It is silly of me to be frightened at things that aren't real. Isn't it?

THE FAUN

I am here. The faun. I am strong as wind and hot as fire. Touch me. (*He advances as she steps back from him.*) It is I who hurl the branches down from the living trees in the storm. I am so strong I

can throttle the wood beasts with one hand — while I laugh.

CLARE

Horrible!

THE FAUN

Beautiful! Have you never run through the night with the stars swimming all about you — or plunged in an ice black pool to come up ringed with silver —

CLARE

I am dreaming. Like Harry, I am dreaming.

THE FAUN

(*Standing above the prostrate and gently breathing* HARRY)

Like Harry! (*He throws back his head and laughs. He leans towards her.*) Yes, dreaming perhaps. But differently. In your eyes is the flicker of shadows in the wood brook. Your head when it turns is the toss of the aspen. Your dreams are real to you — and I am in them — not this pig.

(*He stirs* HARRY *with his foot.* HARRY *turns over on his back with a gentle sigh. His mouth is open.*)

CLARE

(*Rushing to the rescue*)

He is my man. Mine. My fiancé, and he loves me. And I do him. Go away whoever you are or I'll wake him now.

THE FAUN

(*Crouching, his face working*)

Which is more real to you — this snoring creature, far enough away from you now in his sodden sleep, and a future with him that you know no more of, in some noisy, dirty slatternly city where you will become one with the greasy ugly humans about — where you will lose all semblance of the loveliness you have now and be some one you cannot even picture. Which is the more real to you — that — or the whisper in your ear that the hills are free to you — take them — take them — and the shimmer before your eyes that something waits for you just over their crests? Syrinx — Syrinx — (*His voice grows soft — a melting whisper.*) Do not wake.

CLARE

What are you?

THE FAUN

(*Coming towards her*)

I am the magic in life. Believe in me.

CLARE

I almost do.

THE FAUN

(*Standing passive*)

I am waiting — Syrinx.

CLARE

(*In a burst*)

Show me something to prove you are real. Show me!

THE FAUN

(*With a little smile*)

Once you have touched me — willingly. Once I hold you in my arms — willing — You are one of us. You will know it.

CLARE

(*Approaching him — trembling*)

How — how will I know it?

THE FAUN

You will be as air — and sunlight — transparent to human eyes. But you will be as free as they — as immortal. You will be young forever. Come. But you must be willing. (*His voice caresses.*) Surely to touch — surely to be free cannot hurt you?

CLARE

I should — I should love to be young forever.

(*She touches his arm. She reaches up timidly towards his shoulder. He seizes her suddenly and kisses her. Then, still holding her, he throws back his head and laughs loud and long.* CLARE *struggles and frees herself with a jerk.*)

CLARE

Oh, I am frightened. I am. It's horrible. Go away. Harry! Harry!

(THE FAUN *continues to laugh, holding its sides.*)

(HARRY *sits up with a jerk. He looks about him wildly.*)

HARRY

(*In a voice still thick with sleep*)

That you? Clare? Are you calling me? Clare!

CLARE

Here I am. Here I am. Oh hold me, Harry. I'm frightened.

HARRY

(*Jumping to his feet, fully awake*)

Clare! (*He glares wildly about.*)

CLARE

Here! Here! Before you. Don't you see me!

HARRY

(*Lurching out towards her, and past her*)

Where are you? Are you hiding, Clare? Is it a trick? I can hear your voice — just faintly. I'll catch you yet. You wait. (*He looks up the tree, then around it.*)

CLARE

Harry! Look at me! Look at me!

HARRY

(*Peering into the branches of the tree*)

That's what I'm trying to do. Oh, come on down, Clare — the joke's over. Where are you anyway?

THE FAUN

(*With a sidelong leap, circling the tree, and peering out from behind the trunk*)

Anywhere — everywhere — in the shadow — in the

sun, as long as the sun and shadow play. (*He grimaces, and blows in* HARRY'S *face.*)

HARRY

Bother the wind. Clare — where are you? Clare! Don't tease me like this. I never would 'a wanted to hurt your feelings, Clare!

CLARE

(*Sobbing*)

Give him back to me! Let him see me! Take away this awful thing. (*She grovels in the grass before the faun.*) I feel something burning me. Take it away.

THE FAUN

(*Prancing just before her, pointing at her with outstretched arm*)

You gave willingly — and it is given forever. Laugh. And it will burn away all your memories.

CLARE

No. No. Help me. Help me.

HARRY

(*Leaning up against the tree trunk, looking about*)

What's that? I'm coming. (*He starts away.*)

CLARE

(*Gasping*)

No! I'm here. Here with you.

HARRY

(*Returning — worried*)

Then where are you?

THE FAUN

(*Coming near her, still pointing*)

I will come for another kiss — and then — you will be all with us. You will be an aspen tree, and your bright hair will shake in the breeze with its leaves. But when I call, you will break out of the bark, and run until I capture you again. (*He throws back his head and suddenly capers off in a great circle, about them.*)

CLARE

I am here, Harry. Here at your feet. Only you can't see me. (*She gulps.*) I — I am bewitched I think. You never will see me any more. I — I will be an aspen tree! (*She collapses on the grass.*)

HARRY

What's that? I can't hear you.

CLARE

The faun — he came out of the wood — and — and Harry, he kissed me. I let him. Forgive me. Forgive me.

HARRY

(*To himself*)

I don't hear anything any more.

THE FAUN

(*Approaching*)

It's beautiful to be free — Syrinx. As soon as you

laugh you will forget — and I will come for you. (*He prances before* HARRY.) She has gone into the wood, man. Go after her. It is a pretty place, the wood, with green thickets that might hide anything. Come along. I'll show you. (*He dances ahead.*)

CLARE

(*Rising*)

No! No! No!

THE FAUN

Look at him. He doesn't hear you. He is only a lump, and you are immortal with the sunlight now. He will never hold you again. You are for me, Syrinx. I will come back for you — alone.

CLARE

I hate you. You are horrible. You have no heart! Let me go back!

THE FAUN

(*Dancing and pointing his finger at her*)

Never. The immortals have no heart, and no memory. Laugh and you will be an immortal. Laugh. Laugh.

CLARE

(*Sobbing*)

Never to remember anything! Never to be human again!

THE FAUN

When I return I will make you laugh. (*He dances*

off and circles HARRY.) Come seek your love in the thicket, man — and I will scratch you nicely. (*He laughs and plunges into the wood,* HARRY *after him.*)

CLARE

(*She falls face down on the old stone under the oak tree*)

Give me back my life! Give me back my life!

(THE FAUN *and* HARRY *are heard crashing in the underbrush. There comes the faint sound of pipes, then laughter. Then silence.*)

CLARE

(*Sobbing on the stone*)

Whoever you are — God of the woods, you are cruel, cruel!

(*There is a breath of silence, and then a voice speaks from the oak.*)

VOICE

Who drinks the water on my altar?

CLARE

(*Starting up. Her hand is in the little pool on top of the stone and she shakes back her head, some drops of its water flying from her hair.*)

What is that!

VOICE

Who drinks from the stone that has been the drinking cup of Pan?

CLARE

I — I do. (*She puts her hand dazedly to her mouth, and back again to the little pool.*)

VOICE

Wish then. Pan tasted it this morning. Wish. Would you have no fear? Would you be of those who never die? Wish once. It is granted.

CLARE

What — what do you mean?

VOICE

The stone is my altar. It is long since mortal has tasted the water fallen there. But Pan still lives. While there is wind and sun Pan lives.

CLARE

It — it was true then. This was a magic stone. (*She touches it bewilderedly.*)

VOICE

I drank from it at dawn. The water that has touched the lips of Pan is breath of life to a mortal. Are you afraid?

CLARE

No — somehow I am not afraid any longer.

VOICE

Wish then. Once.

CLARE

(*Pushing back her hair*)

I — I seem all bewildered. I have forgotten things. It's — so misty about — and hot.

VOICE

Wish to live forever in the gold of the hills. Wish to fly along the crest of the wind, to learn the secrets of the river, to sing with the leaves in the wood. Wish.

(*There is a sudden crackling in the bushes.* HARRY *emerges, disheveled and panting*)

HARRY

I don't believe it. I don't believe that you've left me. I wouldn't have done this to you, Clare. I wouldn't. Won't you tell me where you are? Clare! Clare! It's all some dreadful nightmare. (*He plunges over towards the tree.*) Clare! Tell me. I'm done up. I am. I feel you're all about, and yet you're hid. It's horrible. (*He sits down under the tree.*) Oh, Clare, what have I done to you? Have you got up and left me for good? You're not in the wood or anywhere! (*He pulls himself together and stretches himself out, his folded arms over his face.*) She'll come back. She must. I'll wait here for her. I'll do it if I die for it.

CLARE

Harry!

(*He does not move.*)

CLARE

Harry!

HARRY

I never meant to do anything wrong.

CLARE

Oh, I can't hurt you this way. It is horrible. Oh, why can't you see me? Why can't you hear me? You must! It is all a dream. Oh, I wish it were. I wish it were a dream. I do!

(She leans back suddenly on the old stone. A change comes over her face. She sinks down, sleepily. HARRY *stirs, turns over lazily, and rises on one elbow.)*

HARRY

(With a yawn, stretching his arms)

Ah-hum. *(He sits up.)* You still here, Clare? I had a rummy dream.

CLARE

(Rising from the stone, a little unsteadily)

I — I think I've been asleep too. I must have been — with some sort of queer dream. I don't remember just what. My foot's asleep. *(She stamps it.)*

HARRY

(Rising, and picking up his coat)

I dreamt something was chasin' me. I couldn't seem to get away from it. We went around in circles and the funny part of it was you was mixed up in it somehow. Well, I guess that's a sign we'd better chase along. Picnic must be most over. *(He rubs his head.)* Queer. I dreamt I was chasin' you, too. And you wasn't at the picnic or nowhere. Just laughed at me. It was hot, too.

CLARE

It is hot. I — I don't think somehow it's as nice here as when we first came. I don't guess I like the country much after all. (*She looks about.*) It's sort of queer and still — and prickly.

HARRY

(*Genially, putting his hat on at an angle*)

What did I tell you? What about a good little spin down the asphalt together and something ice cold after a movie to-night when we get to town. Eh?

CLARE

(*With a sigh*)

That sounds mighty good to me.

(*He takes her arm. They move off slowly.*)

HARRY

(*Shaking out his coat, and readjusting it over his arm*)

I tell you what. Picnics is picnics and the country's the country, even with free bare foot dancin' thrown in — but somehow it ain't exactly comfortable if you ain't bred up on it. Now is it?

(*They walk off behind the hill.*)

The piping is heard again from the thicket. THE NYMPH *suddenly appears from the other side. She dashes into the open, her hair flying out in the wind.* THE FAUN *leaps after her They circle the open space running madly and then plunge into the wood.*

FOR OUTDOOR PRODUCTION OF PAN-PIPES

Any woodland glade will do very prettily for the play instead of the scene in the meadow given. It is nice to have some undergrowth through which the Faun can crash, and a little vista where the Nymph runs off through the woods. The Voice of Pan, of course comes from a person seated behind the big tree that is essential for a center — (This person can also very easily act as prompter.)

FOR INDOOR PRODUCTION OF PAN-PIPES

At the back, a misty green gauze drop with slim high trunks of trees cut out in flat soft gray silhouettes against it. On the sides huge dark trees, their branches meeting overhead. All the trees can be made flat colored, and silhouetted to the audience. The effect is very eerie and striking. In the center, the high, dark gnarled oak with the rough stone altar beneath. The light is the flickering green and gold of sunlight in the woods.

It is better not to try to make the scenery of this play realistic or elaborate. It is an elfin play, and much depends on the suggestion of the uncanny.

FOUR OF A KIND

A Play for a Boat

FOUR OF A KIND[1]

A PLAY FOR A BOAT

SCENE. *The deck of a small sailing craft.*
TIME. *A South Sea afternoon.*

CHARACTERS

JAKE.
CRAWLS.
SMIKE.
WANG-SING.
FATHER JEROLOMEN.

[1] Copyright by Constance Wilcox.

FOUR OF A KIND

THE scene is the deck of a smallish sailing craft, the idle sails and rigging outlined against an intense blue sky. JAKE *and* CRAWLS *come out of the cabin, and throw themselves down to play cards in the shadow of the deck-house.* JAKE *is a burly giant, his head tied with a red handkerchief, silver rings in his ears, and his blue shirt rolled up over arms as hard and brown as the ship mast.* CRAWLS *is a little twisted creature in dingy black, with pasty face and a nervous twitchy way. He props himself up against the deck-house, with his thin legs out in front of him, and holds his cards up close to his face.* JAKE *is sprawled on the deck. There are counters and some small copper coins in front of them. In the distance,* FATHER JEROLOMEN *promenades slowly along the small space of deck in the vivid sunlight. His head, in its black shovel hat is bent, and his hands clasped behind him. He is very slight and stoop shouldered. He wears a black clerical robe.*

JAKE

(*Throwing down his cards*)

Four Jacks. It's mine. (*He pulls some of the coins towards him.*)

CRAWLS

(*As he throws down his cards, with a sniffle*)

That's the third time I've lost running. And there's

only five of my bits left. (*His voice is high and whining.*)

JAKE

(*Shuffling*)

You don't play bold enough, Crawls. It's like walkin' with a crab to throw with you. Step up. Step up. (*He deals.*)

(FATHER JEROLOMEN *comes around the cabin corner. He stops and looks at the players.*)

FATHER JER.

I am grieved to see this, my friends.

JAKE

(*Without looking up from his hand*)

Ah there, Father Jerolomen, we was just takin' advantage of the cabin shade, while Smike in there — (*He jerks his thumb towards the open door of the deck house*) —'s asleep.— 'Ed 'ave us out 'e would — but you wouldn't spoil the rest of a couple o' hard laborin' sea-men what's run your craft proper for you these weeks.

CRAWLS

We has to do somethin' or we'd strangulate whistlin' for the wind.

JAKE

'Onest and 'armless as doves we are. (*His eye strays to* CRAWLS' *hand that is creeping towards the pack of cards.*) None of that now, you sneak, or I'll crack your neck.

FATHER JER.

(*Shaking his head*)

I don't like to see it. When the Hand of the Lord has not seen fit to be with this voyage. When we have been visited with disappointment. It doesn't seem right for the three men who guide this boat to spend their time dicing or in sodden sleep. There is something ill-omened about it. (*He moves on slowly.*)

CRAWLS

(*With a high snicker*)

I've got 'em, I 'ave. (*He rakes the coins in.*)

JAKE

(*Throwing down his cards*)

Ill-omened all right. What did we come for, I say? What kind of a voyage is this that you get nothin' out of? It's not like Smike to tote that fool priest home after he found there wasn't no game attached. It's humiliatin' and I don't like it. (*He picks up his cards.*) Nice job for us what always made our bit easy before and not waited for nothin'.

CRAWLS

(*Pushing out his counters with a grin*)

We wasn't goin' to wait for much if we'd found anythin'. It'd been over the rail with 'im. (*He jerks his thumb towards the priest.*) And quick. I'd 'a' like to seen it.

JAKE

But we didn't find nothin'. We've been had. That's what. O' course there wasn't nothin' on that

balmy island but sand. Eight weeks sailin' for — sand! Give me two and no fingerin' 'em there. (*He holds out his hand for the cards.* CRAWLS *gives a sort of giggle.*) What are you grinnin' at? You're always snickerin' over somethin' these days. I'd like to snicker you for good. I would.

CRAWLS

(*Cringing*)

I was just sayin' wasn't it comical like to be had by a priest for nothin' but our pay. When we 'ad such nice plans and all — us three, and was so careful hidin' 'em.

JAKE

The old shovel has foxed us. That's what. Him and his Sainted Island and 'is Sainted pearls what was never there.

FATHER JER.

(*Appearing again around the corner in his walk*)

Ah, my friends — (*He lifts his head, and surveys them gently.*) I cannot bring myself to believe that. It was the vision of those great drops of Saints' tears that led me into these strange waters, to recover them for the altar. It is I who am unworthy. They would not reveal themselves to me.

JAKE

We'd 'a found 'em all right if they'd 'a been there. There wasn't nothin' in that old heap o' stones but sandbugs. And you can take that straight,

FATHER JER.

And this is the end — emptiness. (*He sits down on an overturned bucket, his hands between his knees, and looks before him dazedly.*) For so long have I dreamed of this voyage, of recovering those miracles of Votive pearls from the ruins of that unhappy, heathen desecrated monastery. Of putting my hand under the very stone where the monks hid them before the last horrible disaster.

CRAWLS

(*Grinning to his cards*)

The blacks slit up every one of 'em.

JAKE

What you ought to be.

FATHER JER.

(*Oblivious*)

And when I had found the courage. When I put my very soul into the venture of this boat. Only the hot — cruel — sea — emptiness — emptiness — and sand. (*He buries his face in his hands.*)

JAKE

(*Throwing down his cards*)

No fault of ours the place was empty. We thought you was tellin' the truth. But they was dreams — that's what they was.

FATHER JER.

(*Rising, with a burst of passion*)

Dreams! Dreams! Mockery! (*He goes to the*

railing and looks out over it.) And a burning, unbelieving sky!

CRAWLS

Dream on, old crow back. (FATHER JER. *walks slowly away.*)

JAKE

You're just a little too cozy with yourself lately, matey. It don't sit well on you.

CRAWLS

I ain't cozy. (*Whining.*) Ain't I fooled with the rest? Didn't I hanker after them pearls — soft — with fair divvies for the three of us, when what we had was 'ard sailin' with a 'eap o' sand at the end? Ain't I got as good a right to talk as you?

JAKE

No, you ain't. (*Laying his cards down, face up.*) What 'ave you got?

CRAWLS

Four Aces. (*He starts to draw the coins toward him.*)

JAKE

(*Rising suddenly and falling on* CRAWLS)

And I saw you sit on two and take another out 'o your coat. You pock-marked octopus. (*He twists himself over the prostrate and almost obliterated* CRAWLS *and throws out some cards.*) There they fly. Now we'll see about you. I'm fair sick 'o you.

CRAWLS

(*In a faint scream*)

Jake — Jake — Don't! Don't!

JAKE

I'll learn you not to be a snickerin', snivelin', smirkin' hypocrite!

CRAWLS

It was only a friendly joke. I only meant it sporty! Ooh! — (*He struggles.*)

JAKE

(*Dragging the writhing* CRAWLS *towards the rail*)

You know what I said last time you sneaked. You can be as sporty as you like — over the side. (*He hauls* CRAWLS *up on the rail.*)

CRAWLS

(*Agonized and kicking*)

No! No! I can't swim! I can't swim!

JAKE

(*Lifting him a little*)

Let the sharks get indigestion of you then. I've had it long enough.

CRAWLS

Wait! Wait! Don't! I'll tell you — I'll tell —

JAKE

(*Pinning him on the rail*)

What'll you tell before you tell it to the sharks?

CRAWLS
(*Desperately*)

There *was* pearls!

JAKE

What!

CRAWLS

There was pearls. Father Jerolomen was right. There was pearls in that old 'eap o' stones. And I know where they are — now.

JAKE

(*Hauling* CRAWLS, *with a great heave, back to the shadow of the cabin.*) You do! Well, where are they?

CRAWLS

I can't get 'em. I can't get 'em.

JAKE

I'll see you do. You'd thieve 'em from us. Would you?

CRAWLS

I didn't thieve 'em. I didn't thieve 'em. Smike took 'em.

JAKE

Smike!

CRAWLS

Yes. He got 'em. He got 'em out o' those stones. Gawd knows how he did it. But he kept 'em. You know Smike.

JAKE

He's got 'em now?

CRAWLS

(*Gulping*)

Yes. I come on 'im one night. 'E thought we was all on shore gettin' provisions. 'E was in the cabin, and I crept up in behind from the other way — through the galley and saw 'im. He had 'em out — twistin' 'em in 'is 'ands. They was long — and glistenin'— in a rope, big and white as agates, and some of 'em shinin' pink in the light — and some greenish —

FATHER JER.

(*Coming around the corner of the cabin*)

There is an odd sort of craft coming up to us on this side, apparently from the town. There are heathen marks on its sides. A big man with a yellow umbrella directs it, and it seems to be rowed by yellow men.

JAKE

(*Releasing* CRAWLS *with a shove*)

A Chinese trader.

FATHER JER.

They appear determined to board us. What shall I say to them?

JAKE

Tell them to go to the devil.

FATHER JER.

What would they want with us?

JAKE

They'd cheat the fillin's out o' your teeth.

(FATHER JEROLOMEN *hurries back.*)

JAKE

(*Seizing* CRAWLS)

Where are they now?

CRAWLS

(*Whining*)

Why should I have to tell you? I've been a-watchin' and a-watchin' them pearls for two weeks now. Ever since we left the island.

JAKE

And 'opin' to sneak off with 'em as soon as you were clear of us. Eh?

CRAWLS

It ain't no more'n you'd do yourself.

JAKE

Well, it's my turn now.

CRAWLS

You'll divvy?

JAKE

(*Shaking him*)

I'll do what I please. What about 'em now? Quick. And if I don't find 'em I'll settle with you.

CRAWLS

They're all there. Every one. Great, round,

milky pearls. There must be five hundred of them. Jake — you'll let me 'ave some? You will?

JAKE

Where are they?

CRAWLS

In the old lantern.

JAKE

What!

(There appears at the back, a yellow unbrella over the ship's rail. This is attached to a large Chinaman in gorgeous robes, and a scarlet silk cap with a purple button and tassel. He advances majestically but softly along the little deck space. When he comes just behind the cabin corner he stops.)

CRAWLS

He took and stuffed 'em in the bottom. He knew we'd never look there, and there it's hung — that old lantern — right in the cabin — with forty thousand pounds worth 'o white pearls in it.

JAKE

The sneakin' scorpion. And us with our bunks forward.

CRAWLS

'E was goin' to wait, I know, until we was all off the boat, and separated, and then 'e was goin' to be rich — rich — and we'd never see 'im again. That's why

'e was takin' the priest back. He don't want no scandal. And I was waitin'. I was just waitin' till we touched the mainland to get ahead 'o 'im. The big bully. I was goin' to slip it over on 'im.

JAKE

We'll do that all right. We'll get 'em now. 'E's asleep, and we'll do what we likes with 'im.

CRAWLS

No— No— 'E'll hurt us!

JAKE

Come on — you sniveler —

(*He starts towards the cabin door, pulling* CRAWLS *by the arm. They run right into* THE CHINAMAN. *He has been standing with a rapt, patient expression. His face is smooth and round and placid, with a little fixed smile. Over one arm is slung an assortment of silks, beads, little bags and small boxes on strings.* FATHER JEROLOMEN *now appears, hovering behind him.*)

THE CHINAMAN

Pretty day. Me Wang-Sing.

JAKE

Get out of here — you.

WANG-SING

Wang-Sing come out to ships in harbor. Me see ship just outside harbor, waiting for wind. Me come

out here in boat. Say "how-do." Me show many pretty things. (*He untwists some of the silks on his arm.*) Silks, fans, beads, bracelets, incense —

JAKE

Do we look as if we wanted that stuff?

WANG

(*Placidly, arranging his wares, hanging the silks over the top of the deck-house, and the beads on them.*)

Me think you like look see. No b'long good joss wait for wind outside harbor when no go to town. Very fine bazaars in town. Wang-Sing have best of all.

CRAWLS

(*Disgustedly to* FATHER JER.)

What did you let 'im on for?

WANG

Me come.

FATHER JER.

He seemed determined. (*He inspects* WANG-SING.) A strange creature of great insistence. Not without intelligence — and perhaps open to conversion.

WANG

Very open. Mind very open. (*He sits down regally on the overturned keg. He holds his umbrella up with one hand, and gesticulates with the other.*) What say for fine striped silks, red, green, purple painted with dragons for the coat? (*He takes*

some vials out of his sash.) This small jar — perfume. This one opium.

JAKE
(*Sullenly*)

Go choke yourself on it.

FATHER JER.

Opium!

WANG
(*Smiling*)

Very fine. Very good. Opium. Bring forget.

FATHER JER.

Wickedness! Wickedness!

WANG
(*Rising politely*)

You b'long priest? You no like opium? Very good for priests in their cells. Give dreams. Sometimes the priests from the white house behind the town send for things in the bazaar. Buy opium from Wang-Sing. Very like you those priests. Same straight black.

FATHER JER.

No! (*He seizes the opium from* WANG'S *hand.*)

WANG

Very wise men. Very tiresome always in cell. Wang-Sing sell forget.

FATHER JER.

Horrible! (*He throws the vial on the deck. It breaks.*)

JAKE

That's the way. Smash his goods for breakin' in on our deck. Get out now. Don't you see the gent don't like your ways?

WANG

(*Mildly*)

No offend. Only much waste. Too bad. Sorry. (*He fixes* FATHER JEROLOMEN *with his eye.*) Opium worth much gold. Very rare kind. Wang-Sing lose money. Priest not do right by him.

FATHER JER.

(*Unsteadily*)

I — I am sorry. I — hardly know my own actions. I have had a great sorrow, a terrific disappointment — a loss of all I hoped for. (*He passes his hand over his forehead.*) You must excuse me. It — is so hot — and strange here.

WANG

Sun go to your head maybe. Priest b'long in cell. All cool there.

FATHER JER.

You say there is a Christian monastery — here?

WANG

Oh yees. Clistian. Very big. White house in desert. Priests like you come. Go in. Never come out. Just behind town. On hill. You see maybe from end of boat. Out in desert.

FATHER JER.

Quiet. Out in the desert. A heavenly quiet.

CRAWLS

Why don't you skip there then? We won't cry over your goin'.

JAKE

Straight. We wouldn't.

WANG

More better than too much noise for priests. Not get excited. No break good merchants bottles. Lose much money. Very much cheat.

FATHER JER.

Don't speak that word to me. (*He feels in his sash and takes out a gold piece.*) These seas and islands are a corruption and a sore on the world. I sicken of them. Blistering, sweltering, thieving, heathenish! The sand burns my eyes and the pitiless sky scorches my soul. It would be the penance of Hell to stay here. (*He gives* WANG *the gold.* WANG *takes it with a deep bow, and bites it as he bends.*)

WANG

(*Quickly, as* FATHER JER. *turns from him*) You take another? Just a little one for present? Cumsha? Good-feeling from Wang-Sing — to forget? (*He holds out a little vial.*)

FATHER JER.

You fill me with horror. (*He goes quickly behind the cabin.*)

WANG

(*Looking after him*)

Him very upset. Master of ship much disturb. Why he come if find it like he say? Queer. Explain.

JAKE

(*Nervously, fingering the silk*)

Oh — He's soft in the head.

CRAWLS

It's only his loony way. (*He quickly picks up a string of beads.*) How much you sell?

WANG

All good jade. Me sell twelve pieces. Very fine bargain.

CRAWLS

You fat old pirate! (*He flings down the beads.*)

WANG

(*Fingering his stock*)

Or you like fans? Very fine. Six pieces. All painted ivory. Very cheap. Nice carved moonstones — rings — jade frogs — Anything but pearls. Very sorry. No pearls.

CRAWLS

(*Throwing himself on the silks and gathering them all up in a heap*)

You take your rubbish. We don't want any of it.

JAKE

Yes. Skip. Quick.

WANG

Me no go.

JAKE

We'll see to that.

WANG

(*Gently*)

Me no want fuss. Call police. Very tiresome. Me only say no go until something sell. Bad joss.

JAKE

(*Plunging his hand into his pocket*)

You clear out if we buy something?

WANG

(*Bowing*)

Sure. No fuss. No row. Just buy some little thing.

JAKE

Give me that wooden box. Here's three coppers. (*He throws them down on the deck-house.*)

WANG

(*Quickly taking up the box*)

Me have different price.

JAKE

Not another grain.

WANG

No, different. Little box very small. Just give as present — for something else. Exchange. Remember ship by, no go unless exchange.

CRAWLS

Give 'im the yard arm.

JAKE

(*Gathering up the pennies*)

What d'ye want?

WANG

Old lantern. Hang in cabin.

JAKE

What!

CRAWLS

(*In a thin scream*)

Aah!

WANG

Me like that. You have box. Me lantern. (*He pushes the box, smiling, across the cabin top.*)

JAKE

(*Making a dive for the door*)

I'll get it for you.

WANG

(*Blocking him*)

No. Me get lantern. Wang-Sing take lantern only as is. No take anything out. No change.

CRAWLS

You sneakin', spyin' thief!

JAKE

You'd listen. Would you? I'll crop your ears for

ye. (*He lunges toward* WANG *who steps back and claps his hands sharply.*)

WANG

Observe — behind you. (*The heads of three grinning Chinamen appear over the rail. They have bare muscular arms, and knives in their hands.*) My boatmen wait for me. Very active men. No good argue with Wang-Sing. Not healthy.

JAKE

(*Dropping his hold of* WANG)

You yellow buzzard!

WANG

(*He claps his hands and nods at the men. They disappear*)

Very good. Now we talk.

JAKE

What do you want?

WANG

The lantern.

JAKE

I'll see you throttled with your own fan cord first.

CRAWLS

And I'll help.

WANG

(*Imperturbably, fanning himself*)

No good. Bad to have fuss. Noise. Quarrel.

Murder maybe. No. No. Bring police. They no care for men who steal pearls.

CRAWLS

(*In a wail*)

But they're ours — ours.

WANG

Wang-Sing no fool.

JAKE

What do you know about 'em?

WANG

(*Still fanning*)

Wang-Sing know pearls belong priest. He look for pearls some weeks ago in stones of old church. No find. Ver' too bad. Wang-Sing hear many ways in bazaar. Alla same pearls b'long priest. Police come. He get them back. No one else get them. Maybe you go jail.

JAKE

I'll give you a third of 'em.

CRAWLS

That's shares and everybody even.

WANG

(*Advancing slowly towards the cabin door*)

I give you each one — two maybe. Keep quiet. Otherwise call police.

JAKE

(*Agonized*)

Oh — you made me tell you, Jake. You made me tell — and look wot it's come to now!

(*As* WANG *sets foot on the threshold a loud whistling is heard from the darkness of the cabin within.* WANG *recoils.*)

CRAWLS

It's Smike. 'E's awake. Now we're done, for fair.

JAKE

I 'ope 'e breaks 'is neck.

CRAWLS

(*Cringing*)

Who's neck?

(SMIKE *appears slouching in the doorway. He is a tall, sallow man, in torn and dirty white trousers and shirt. A wide shade hat is pulled down over his forehead, shading restless black eyes, and a long thin nose. He carries himself with a swagger, and rests one hand on a pistol in his dirty red sash.*)

SMIKE

(*With a shove of his hand that sends* WANG *back a pace*)

What were you doing coming into my cabin? (*From his voice he is just a little intoxicated, and still sleepy.*) Come on — what were you doing?

WANG

Many apologies. Much sorry intrude. Just make friendly call. Me Wang-Sing. Good merchant. Me just step inside cabin. See if need new silk for cushions maybe. Have got fine cheap silk.

SMIKE

I guess I can worry along a while longer without any of your silk in my cabin. And I'd just as soon shoot any yellow head on sight that comes in without an invitation. Or any one else, either. Just hold on to that. Keep out of my cabin. (*He swings up onto the deck-house top, and sits, dangling his legs over the open cabin door.*)

WANG

(*Bowing*)

Wang-Sing hear much of Mr. Captain Smike. Him very good shot. Him much respect. His boat, too.

JAKE

Us three's solid. You can drink that straight.

SMIKE

What's up?

CRAWLS

(*Cringing and fingering the silks*)

'E was cheatin' us, 'e was. The old yellow bull frog 'ead. 'E was bullyin' us with 'is pirates in 'is boat alongside there. We as 'as lost so much and ain't got nothin'. We 'as 'ad a 'ard disappointment.

WANG

Me poor man, too. Very poor.

JAKE

Yes. We've enough to swallow without 'im addin' to it.

CRAWLS

We as is so 'ard up.

SMIKE

You don't seem able to talk of much else.

CRAWLS

It's an absorbin' subject.

SMIKE

(*To* WANG)

What did you come here for?

WANG

(*Sitting himself on an overturned bucket*)

Me come on business.

SMIKE

Just what business?

JAKE

'Old 'ard there now.

CRAWLS

(*Shaking*)

Yes. You be careful how you talk; we don't know nothin' about it, remember.

JAKE

And it's rotten business whatever it is.

WANG

(*Gently*)

Me come on good business. Very good. About pearls.

SMIKE

(*Softly, fondling his revolver*)

Pearls? What pearls?

CRAWLS

Don't you listen to 'im.

WANG

(*Calmly*)

Me not know yet. Wang-Sing come 'board. Hear much about pearls. Long string. Very fine. These gentlemen want to get rid. Wang-Sing buy may-be.

SMIKE

(*Shifting his gaze and his revolver to* JAKE *and* CRAWLS)

Very interesting story. Very. Which one of you thought of this first?

CRAWLS

Oh, 'e come on us. I swear 'e did. The old fox foot crep' up on us from behind while we was talkin'. We never meant to slip nothin' over on you. Like you was doin' on us. We just happened to find 'em natural — and we was talkin'—

SMIKE

(*Slipping down from the deck house and advancing on him*)

Well, you sneak, Crawls. You won't talk much longer.

JAKE

(*Vindictively*)

Yes. 'E was the one as found out where you 'id 'em. And 'e was goin' to sneak 'em out on you, 'e was. Ask 'im what 'e's been plannin' to do these weeks. I was the one as just found it out.

CRAWLS

Ask 'im what 'e was goin' to do when 'e made me tell 'im. Take every one of 'em 'imself, 'e was.

SMIKE

(*Still advancing*)

I'll settle with him later. (*His voice is very smooth.*) You was the first to find 'em. Was you?

CRAWLS

(*Screaming*)

Don't you do nothin' to me. Don't! don't! If you do 'e'll 'ave the 'Arbor Police on you. And you'll jail for it! Don't you see 'e will? Don't you see?

WANG

Police come. Very tiresome. No can do good business. No can do anything. Better fix up pearls. Us four. All quiet.

SMIKE

(*Leaning against the deck house*)

That's the trick. Is it? You three lyin', thievin', pickin' carrion!

JAKE

And what was you plannin' to do to us two? Sneak off with 'em all to yourself. Keep 'em. Them was your plans.

SMIKE

And there's nothin' between me and them — but you three. (*He fingers his revolver.*)

CRAWLS

(*Terrified*)

You can't! You can't! 'E's got a boat full o' Chinamen over the side, and it'll 'ave all of us.

JAKE

Them pearls is ours, too — or I split about them wherever I am.

WANG

Pearls no b'long any one here. Pearls b'long priest. Alla same very good pearls. Priest no know how use them. Better not waste pearls.

SMIKE

I'm sick.

CRAWLS

You would hide 'em from us. You would keep 'em. And now it's four instead of three. You can't say as how you didn't start it.

WANG

All fine. Divide pearls in four equals. One share each of us four. Very good business. All square.

JAKE

And no slippery footin' it by any of us this time.

CRAWLS

Us four — equals.

SMIKE

I'll see it's equals. Crawls, step in there and bring out the lantern. I'll watch these two. No more talkin' goes on here without my hearin' it — and no one gets in the close cabin. And if you're more than four seconds haulin' that lantern out, Crawls, you're dead. And there'll be no tellin' the police. Eh?

JAKE

That's straight.

(CRAWLS *dives into the cabin, and instantly there is a shriek of horror from him.* JAKE *and* SMIKE *spring to the door.* WANG *starts up.*)

SMIKE

(*Leaning over the threshold*)

What's that? What's that? Crawls!

CRAWLS

(*Within, in sobbing gasps*)

It ain't! It ain't! No! No! I never did nothin' to it!

SMIKE

(*Reaching in and catching hold of* CRAWLS, *who is writhing on the floor*)

What are you slobbering about?

CRAWLS

The lantern! The lantern! It ain't there!

SMIKE

What! (*He brings out* CRAWLS *with a jerk, and throws him on the deck.*)

JAKE

What! (*He dashes into the cabin. He reappears in the door.*) It's gone. Clean gone.

SMIKE

Gone! It was there all right. Crawls —

CRAWLS

(*Struggling up from the deck*)

Look-a-here. Look-a-here. This paper. It was 'anging on the 'ook of the lamp and I took it. (*He brings up a piece of paper.*) It says the priest's took it. 'E's took it and gone!

SMIKE

What's that?

WANG

Tell quick. Or I call men. Big fight.

CRAWLS

(*Reading*)

'E's took 'em. Your men and the boat, too. 'E's paid 'em to take 'im ashore. 'E's sneaked off with the boat. (*Sobbing.*) 'E says 'e'll send it back when 'e's safe in the monastery. 'Im and the pearls.

WANG

What's that? Pearls gone?

CRAWLS

(*Reading agonizedly*)

'E says 'e 'eard us. (*In a rising wail.*) And 'e was 'orrified and upset.

JAKE

The black 'opping 'ypocritical crow!

CRAWLS

'E says the boat was sent from 'eaven to 'elp 'im escape. And 'e 'opes we'll reform!

JAKE

'E done us. I knew 'e would. 'E and 'is sneakin', listenin' ways. 'E was always creeping up on us. Listenin'. We might 'a known. There's no privacy on this boat.

CRAWLS

They're gone! They're gone! (*Sobbing.*) 'E sneaked in from the back, the galley way, while we was talkin'—

JAKE

(*Wrenching his arm*)

Yes, the same as you sneaked in and saw 'em.

CRAWLS

(*Giving way hopelessly*)

The same! The same! Only 'e's got 'em! For good!

WANG

(*Striding about frenziedly*)

No boat. No boat. No catch him. What can do? Nothing.

CRAWLS

Not even our pay left! 'E says we're thieves!

SMIKE

(*Falling on* CRAWLS)

You'll pay for this. You sneak.

(See Note, page 124.) *

CRAWLS

(*Struggling violently*)

Who was it started it all? Who stole 'em to begin with? You! You thievin' vulture!

JAKE

(*Falling on* WANG)

It's you kept us from gettin' at 'em. You pirate!

WANG

(*Falling on* SMIKE)

Wang-Sing mad. Wang-Sing furious. Cheated! Cheated! Cheated!

(They all struggle, shouting on the deck and disappear into the cabin, still struggling.

* NOTE.

(If the struggle ending is found difficult and cumbersome on a small indoor stage this is an alternative.)

SMIKE

You'll pay for this. You sneak.

(*He seizes* CRAWLS *and drags him, screaming and struggling towards the boat's side.*)

CRAWLS

(*Resisting violently*)

Who was it started it all? Who stole 'em to begin with? You! You thievin' vulture!

(*They disappear, fighting, behind the sail.*)

JAKE

(*Making for* WANG)

It's you kept us from gettin' at 'em. You pirate!

WANG

Wang Sing mad. Wang Sing furious.

(*As* JAKE *approaches, he gathers up his skirts, and swiftly ducks behind the cabin.*)

Get police. Remember. Get police. Cheated. Cheated. Cheated.

(SMIKE *suddenly appears from behind the sail, without* CRAWLS. JAKE *draws a pistol, and covers him.* SMIKE *pulls his pistol at the same time. They stand there measuring each other,*

the round, yellow face of WANG *watching from around the cabin corner. The curtain falls — slowly. After it has completely dropped, there is one pistol shot.*)

FOR OUTDOOR PRODUCTION OF FOUR OF A KIND

The deck of a houseboat can be easily used for this play if there is room for an audience. The action of the play takes place in a very small space. A portion of the deck ten feet by six should be sufficient. Father Jerolomen in his promenade, could even walk back through the audience, and come back again for his cue. A small rowboat with the Chinaman and his crew can be moored close to the side of the boat, in such a way that the audience does not see it. The Chinaman simply appears over the side of the boat at his cue.

If the boat used is a sailboat, the action can take place on the deck, the audience being seated in the cockpit and in small rowboats about. Or the audience may be on a wharf, and the play take place on a small sized sailboat moored close to the wharf. In this case, the sail should be up, hiding the small boat with the Chinamen.

FOR INDOOR PRODUCTION

This play could be very simply given on any improvised stage. Almost no scenery is necessary. A bright blue backdrop for the sky — a corner of sail drawn across it, below it the deck rail rising about three feet above the deck, a few coiled ropes, and an overturned bucket. At one side, the suggestion of a low roofed cabin, with a door. The curtain rises on Jake and Crawls playing cards on the deck, and falls on the confusion of the general fight. The lighting should be very bright, making sharp black shadows, and vivid yellow spaces of sunlight.

THE PRINCESS IN THE FAIRY TALE

THE PRINCESS IN THE FAIRY TALE[1]

A Garden Fairy Story for Children

Scene. *A garden in a fairy tale.*
Time. *A summer afternoon.*

CHARACTERS

The Princess in the Fairy Tale.
The Old Nurse.
The Dragon.
The Prince in the Fairy Tale.
Billy Travers.
The King in the Fairy Tale.
The Queen in the Fairy Tale.
The Six Little Princesses.
The Two Heralds.

[1] Copyright, 1919, by Constance Wilcox.

THE PRINCESS IN THE FAIRY TALE

(NOTE)

THIS setting is purely fantastic, and meant to be achieved by an indoor production. The suggestions for outdoor production are at the end of the play.

The scene is a garden. Four tall dark cedars guard it at the back, and behind their high silhouettes is a vague woodland, with slim tree trunks gray against a twilight mist, filled with an eerie, dim, mauve light. In the foreground, a round fountain, with one bright jet of water springing up from its clear pool. THE DRAGON *lies by the fountain, his silver scales gleaming softly. As he lies, his horned head, with its scales and alligator jaw, rests peacefully on his outstretched front claws. His eyes are closed, and he is breathing gently, a little blue smoke coming from his wide nostrils. The little* PRINCESS *is seated on a low stool by the fountain, sewing. She is dressed in a very short white ruffled pinafore, with a crown embroidered in one corner, and her plump little legs in their white socks and black strap slippers are crossed primly before her. She has a quantity of beautiful fair hair hanging like spun silk, loose over her shoulders, and she wears a*

very small high pointed gold crown. Her round pink and white face is all screwed up in her attempts at sewing as she jabs in and out of her embroidery.

THE OLD NURSE *sits on a stool a little behind, at the right of the* PRINCESS. *She is very fat, and dressed in voluminous leaf brown, with a wide frilly cap framing her wrinkled face, topped by a pointed black witch hat.*

The light in the garden is clear, and yet very soft, with an odd bluish tinge, like the edge of twilight. The sky above the dark cedars is a deep twilight blue.

THE NURSE

(*In a droning voice, as her head nods back and forth on her ample chest*)

" A moonbeam floateth from the skies —
Whispering —' Heighho, my dearie; (*She sighs sleepily*)
I would spin a web before your eyes —
A beautiful web of silver light,
Wherein is many a wondrous sight
Of a radiant garden leagues away —
Where the softly tinkling lilies sway —
. . . Heighho, my dearie! ' "

EUGENE FIELD.

(*With a deep sigh, her voice trails away and she sleeps.* THE DRAGON *joins her with a gentle snore.*)

PRINCESS

(*With a sudden vicious jab of the needle*)

Ouch! (*She puts her finger in her mouth.*)

NURSE

(*Waking with a start, and rushing to the* PRINCESS *shaking her by the shoulder*)

Drat the child! Take your thumb out of your mouth! (*She fishes a handkerchief out of the* PRINCESS' *pinafore pocket.*) And let three drops fall on your handkerchief at once! What sort of a Fairy Tale Princess are you — to let an opportunity like that go to waste. Oh, dear, Oh, dear! (*She tries to squeeze the* PRINCESS' *finger over the handkerchief.*)

PRINCESS

(*Jerking her hand away, and sticking her thumb in her mouth again*)

I will put my thumb in my mouth. I will. I will. (*She beats a tattoo on the stool with her heels.*) I won't put three drops on my handkerchief to make another old fairy tale — so it can be lost, and the Dragon eat it, or the pixies steal it, or the Prince find it. Of course he would find it and come flourishing back with the silly thing to me. They always end the same way. I'm tired of 'em. I am. I am! I'm sick of being the Princess in the Fairy Tale! Yah!

NURSE

You can't help that, my dearie, because that's what you are, and that's what you must be until the Fairy Lands fall into dust.

PRINCESS

They're all asleep now. I'm going to run away. (*She jumps up, and puts her embroidery on the stool.*)

NURSE

You can't do that, my dearie, because it's all a dream, and you are part of it.

PRINCESS

(*Stamping her foot*)

Then I will wake it up!

NURSE

(*With a little chuckle*)

You are part of the Fairy Tale even when you lose your temper. The Princess in the Fairy Tale can frequently do that. (*The* PRINCESS *swiftly runs out her tongue.*) But they never stick out their tongue. No. No. Naughty.

PRINCESS

(*Jumping up and down*)

I will be naughty! My foot's asleep. And I'm tired of being the sweet little Princess with golden hair, who waits around and waits around, and never does anything interesting, but sits in a tower window or under a tree with a dragon, and is rescued each evening by the same little sissy Prince!

NURSE

That's what makes the Fairy Tales. We each have our part to play. (*She tries to straighten the* PRINCESS' *pinafore.*) Now you mustn't get your clean pinafore all mussed, and your hair tumbled. It's almost time for the afternoon Story of the Dragon. I heard the owl hoot the first three times in the wood.

That means the Prince has started on his journey. He'll be here soon.

PRINCESS

(*Jerking away as the* NURSE *tries to arrange her hair*)

I don't want him to come. I don't want my hair smoothed. It's always being brushed, and fussed with, and last time the little silly tried to climb to the tower window on it he pulled dreadfully!

NURSE

(*Soothingly*)

But think how nice to be rescued from the dragon, and have all the trumpets blow, and the King and Queen come into the garden and order the cannon shot off, and the banquet — and the march of triumph around the dreadful dragon.

PRINCESS

He isn't a bit dreadful. He just sleeps and never even looks at me. He isn't half the nuisance the Prince is. I wish he would beat the Prince up for once.

NURSE

Oh, no, no. That wouldn't be according to law. And then think of all the festivity when he is vanquished!

PRINCESS

I don't think it's fun. And they never let me sit up for the banquet — and I hate walking in a silly procession and trying to keep off the long trains. And I want my tea!

NURSE

There. There. Sit down and finish the nice cobweb embroidery you are working for the Queen's birthday. It will never be done. You can leave a space for the evil Fairy to finish one corner.

PRINCESS

(*Sitting sulkily*)

Can't I ever have any fun? I want my tea.

NURSE

Just you be good, my dearie, and I will get you the tea. You shall have it right after the story with the Dragon.

PRINCESS

With strawberries?

NURSE

With strawberries — and sugar comfits. I'll go see to them now. Be good. (*She puts the* PRINCESS' *crown into place.*) Just think of the dragon. He never gets any tea.

(*She goes out, briskly at the left, vanishing behind the trees. The* PRINCESS *sews for a moment, then stops, looks over her shoulder to make sure the* NURSE *has gone, slips from her seat, and tiptoes to* THE DRAGON, *who is still snoring very softly.*)

PRINCESS

(*In a whisper*)

Dragon! (*A little louder, and moving nearer.*) Dragon!

(THE DRAGON *stirs uneasily, and breathes an especially deep snore. The* PRINCESS *gets down softly on her knees, picks a long blade of grass, and tickles* THE DRAGON'S *nose with it.*)

PRINCESS

Dragon! (*She tickles his nose.*)

DRAGON

(*Moving a little*)

Ur-umph! (*He puffs out a lot of blue smoke.*)

PRINCESS

There's a dear! (*She tickles one ear.*)

DRAGON

(*In a very deep grumbly, sleepy voice*)

Ur-umph. What d'y want?

PRINCESS

(*Sitting back on her heels*)

Wake up, Dragon.

DRAGON

(*Turning a little and opening one eye*)

What for? 'Tisn't time yet. You can't fool me. I know it like a book. What y' disturbing me for? (*He closes his eye again.*)

PRINCESS

I want to talk to you! (*She leans forward and tickles his ear.*)

DRAGON

Talk then. But don't whisk that thing about me! (*He shakes his head peevishly, and opens his eyes.*)

PRINCESS

(*Getting down close to him — in a whisper*)

Dragon. Eat him!

DRAGON

(*With a prodigious yawn, showing his huge Crocodile mouth and teeth*)

Eat who?

PRINCESS

(*Clapping her hands*)

That's it! You have such a beautiful, big, red mouth and such long teeth. Eat him for me, Dragon. Eat him!

DRAGON

(*Rolling his eyes at her reproachfully*)

I'm not a cannibal. I eat grasshoppers only, and precious few and stringy they are since the fairies have such a fad for riding them.

PRINCESS

Then scare him, Dragon. Open your mouth and bellow, and frighten him, so he'll run and never come back.

DRAGON

Who?

PRINCESS

The Prince.

DRAGON

I couldn't do it.

PRINCESS

Oh, yes, you could. You have no idea how soft he is, and little and fat. And easily scared!

DRAGON

But that sharp bright sword of his! He flicks it in front of me. And my eyes are weak.

PRINCESS

That's all he does. He doesn't know how to use it. And he's so used to your just lying down and letting him walk on you, that he'd never stop running if you just once turned on him and snapped. Oh, do, there's a darling, Dragon. Then he wouldn't bother me any more. And he is such a tiresome little boy.

DRAGON

(*Reflectively, blinking his eyes*)

I don't see why I should. I don't see what I get out of this. (*He grumbles deeply.*) For that matter what do I ever get out of anything, but a few hours' sleep and that disturbed —

PRINCESS

I am so sorry. But it is so important. As a favor —

DRAGON

I don't see that it is important. Here I am very comfortable. What's the use of stirring everything

up, and goodness knows what might happen? How do I know but he might accidentally jab that sword in my eye? And I'm not as spry as I used to be. He might beat me anyway. And think of the humiliation of that!

PRINCESS

He wouldn't. He's the scaredest little thing, really!

DRAGON

Even at that, where do I come in? Nobody ever pays any attention to me anyway, and if the Prince went away I would lose my job. I can hardly feed myself as it is. And no one ever invites me to tea. (*Ruminatively.*) And I have always loved candies.

PRINCESS

I will. I will give you half my tea. It's to be a lovely one. With strawberries — and sugar — and —

DRAGON

Candies?

PRINCESS

Comfits. Pink ones. Just chase the Prince a little way, Dragon, dear, and you can have all the comfits! — except one.

DRAGON

How could I get at the Prince? They'd never let me do it here.

PRINCESS

(*Eagerly clasping her hands*)

You could go to meet him. In the wood. And

then he would be surprised. He wouldn't have a chance. And run! (*She laughs.*) Just one beautiful blue snort from you — and my — he would run! I should love to see it. Come. Quick. (*She tugs at* THE DRAGON'S *claw, and he slowly lifts himself.*)

DRAGON

I am to have all the comfits.

PRINCESS

How greedy. But never mind. Just one switch of your tail and a good roar as if you meant it, and don't forget to open your beautiful red mouth. (*She drags him towards the wood.*)

DRAGON

You say he is very gentle? He always looked quite vicious to me — with that long sword.

PRINCESS

He's really very little — and fat.

DRAGON

(*Doubtfully*)

Well, I hope so. As a matter of fact I never have got a good look at him for all we meet every day. You see there is so much blue smoke to breathe out, that it fogs up the atmosphere, and then he flashes his sword, and, as I said, my eyes are a little weak. I always close them just as soon as I'm conquered so I can sleep as much as possible.

PRINCESS

(*Impatiently*)

Yes. Yes. But hurry. You will meet him at the edge of the wood. He must be almost there now.

DRAGON

(*Rolling his eyes*)

But how do I know after all I won't mistake him? He's always wearing some new costume, and I'd hate to stir up any of those spiteful tempered little pixies. They'd prick me all over with thistles.

PRINCESS

The pixies never come out till the moon is up. And the Prince is the only one who ever comes through the fairyland wood. He'll be a little boy without any horns on his head like the pixies, and he'll come along the highroad between Fairyland and the Outside, and turn into the wood. And then, one big snap and a growl and blue fire, and you can come down for tea with me. And nobody will disturb us.

DRAGON

Little and fat. You're quite sure he'll run?

PRINCESS

Oh, quite.

DRAGON

Gr-umph. (*He puffs out blue smoke.*) This is quite an adventure. I feel almost young again. Gr-umph! (*He turns into the wood.*)

PRINCESS

(*Dancing up and down*)

Isn't it fun! Good-by, Dragon, dear.

DRAGON

(*Turning to look back*)

All the comfits, mind. Don't you eat any before I come.

PRINCESS

Good-by. Good-by. (*She waves, as* THE DRAGON *slowly crawls through the wood. His silver scales gleam for a moment among the trees and then vanish in the mists.*)

(*There sound three hoots of an owl. The* PRINCESS *turns with a jump, and looks about anxiously.*)

PRINCESS

It isn't time yet, I'm sure. Oh, I hope he isn't too late. He's such a ponderous old thing! (*She looks into the wood after* THE DRAGON.)

(*The* PRINCE *in the Fairy Tale enters suddenly from the right, emerging from the bushes. He is a plump little boy in a purple Fauntleroy suit with a deep lace collar, and a golden sash. He wears a little soft velvet cap with a long white feather, and his hair falls to his shoulders in neat yellow curls. He is very pretty, with a dimpled chin, and carries himself with a little swagger, pointing out his buckled slippers as he walks. A jaunty short velvet cap swings*

from his shoulders, and in one hand he carries a very long unsheathed rapier.)

PRINCESS

(*Seeing him, with a little cry*)

Oh — now you've spoiled everything! (*She advances on him.*) How did you get here — and it's long before the time!

PRINCE

(*With a low bow and a sweep of his cap*)

Charming Princess. Behold, the Prince is here. (*He has some difficulty managing both the very long sword and the cap.*)

PRINCESS

(*Plumping down on her little stool*)

I could just cry with vexation! (*The* PRINCE *puts on his cap and takes an airy step, flourishing the sword.*) Well — how did you do it? Sneak up on me like that. You're always doing something silly.

PRINCE

(*Loftily*)

My Fairy Godmother met me, if you must know, and brought me here in her private chariot. It was very nice of her to save me all that walk through the wood — and the briars. I would have been a little late otherwise.

PRINCESS

(*Flouncing off the stool*)

Yes, Prinker. You like to have your hair

curled. I bet you were trying on lace collars — to see which was the most becoming!

PRINCE

(*Touching his collar*)

This is a new one. For my birthday. (*He flicks his sword.*) And this, too. (*He tries a fencing attitude.*)

PRINCESS

Oh — do stop that. I know you can't use it. It's ridiculous and as long as you are.

PRINCE

I certainly can. (*He looks around.*) Why, where's the Dragon?

PRINCESS

(*Clasping her hands and taken aback*)

Oh, dear. You *have* upset things!

PRINCE

But where is he?

PRINCESS

(*Recovering herself*)

Why should I know? (*She retires and stands aloofly looking into the wood.*) Your business is to rescue me from him.

PRINCE

But what will I do if he isn't here?

PRINCESS

(*Scornfully*)

You never have any ideas.

(*There comes a sudden bellowing from the wood.*)

PRINCE

(*Jumping back a foot*)

What's that!

PRINCESS

Oh, what can have happened to the Dragon!

(*The bellowing becomes louder, and is mingled with a crashing of a heavy body approaching rapidly through the wood.*)

PRINCE

The Dragon!

PRINCESS

Yes. It's all your fault. Now he may be bewitched or eaten some catnip or something, and eat us both! (*She runs terrified, back to the fountain. The* PRINCE *leaps away still further.*)

PRINCE

But he can't do that! Why, I always must vanquish him!

PRINCESS

But I've upset everything! Goodness knows what will happen. Oh, dear!

PRINCE

This is awful! (*He runs to the furthest corner of the garden, followed by the* PRINCESS.

(THE DRAGON *appears, rushing through the wood, bellowing and blowing blue smoke. He tears down into the garden, howling. A small boy leaps after him shouting and throwing stones.*

DRAGON

Oh! Oh! Stop him! He's killing me! (*He races around the fountain in long snaky twists, followed by the joyously shrieking small boy.*)

BOY

(*Throwing stones*)

Ki-yi! There's one on your nose!

PRINCESS

(*Rushing out and stopping the boy by force*)

Here, you. Don't you treat my Dragon like that!

BOY

(*Stopping*)

Oh — was it a pet of yours? (*He is a sturdy little boy with short touseled brown hair, a round freckled face, heavy boots and stockings, corduroy knickerbockers, and a rumpled brown shirt.*)

PRINCESS

It is. You shouldn't throw stones in Fairy Land.

PRINCE

(*Stepping out from behind the* PRINCESS)

It's our Dragon.

PRINCESS

And you've been treating it abominably!

DRAGON

(*In a wail*)

You said he was soft — and little — and fat! I knew he was vicious! Why, he's made of India rubber and has the disposition of a wildcat! I only spoke to him, and he was after me like a thousand hawks, throwing stones! Soft! Little! Ooh! I'll never believe you again!

PRINCESS

You got the wrong one, silly.

DRAGON

I told you my eyes were weak — and I puffed out so much smoke nobody could tell. You said the Prince was the only boy would come into the wood. I'm all over cracks and bruises! Ooh!

PRINCE

(*To* DRAGON)

What did you let a common trespasser in for?

DRAGON

I don't want him. (*He crawls off, breathing heavily, and lies down at the far right.*)

BOY

Well, he said he wanted to eat me. I met him up on the edge of the wood there. And he made faces at me, and stuck out his tongue. Of course. (*He*

plunges his hands into his pockets.) No one can do that — not even your pet animal. You see that. I had to show him.

PRINCE

(*Advancing*)

I vanquish him every day.

BOY

(*Fanning himself with his cap*)

Hot work.

PRINCE

It doesn't disturb me at all. I just come. And he lets me walk on him.

BOY

You're pretty fond of yourself. Aren't you?

PRINCESS

(*To the* BOY)

What's your name?

BOY

Billy. What's yours?

PRINCE

I am the Prince in the Fairy Tale.

BILLY

I didn't ask you, curly-locks. (*He turns to the* PRINCESS.) You seem to have a lot of spunk for a girl. And any one with a pet like that would have, of course. What is your name?

PRINCESS

(*Uncertainly*)

I — I'm — not quite sure.

BILLY

That's funny. (*Decidedly.*) Well, it ought to be Margery. I know a girl at home called Margery who has hair like yours. She's a very nice girl.

PRINCESS

I think you are a very nice boy. Will you stay here with me?

PRINCE

(*Pushing in*)

She's the Princess in the Fairy Tale of course, just as I'm the Prince. And this is our private Fairy Garden. How did you get in, and who are you, and don't you know you're trespassing? You must go right away.

DRAGON

Yes. For heaven's sake, don't keep that wild-cat in our garden.

PRINCESS

I will keep him. I will. (*She drags* BILLY *by the hand.*) He will stay and teach me to throw stones nicely as he does. What kingdom did you come from Billy?

BILLY

(*His hands in his pockets*)

Why, I live in the little white house by the Grocery store on Main street.

PRINCE

Well, you don't belong here. How did you get here?

BILLY

I was just walking along, and I chased a squirrel up to the edge of the wood — and then I met this — this creature here. And there didn't seem anything for me to do but chase him when he stuck out his tongue I guess I came pretty far.

PRINCE

You can go back now.

PRINCESS

No. You're going to stay here. I like you. You can be the Prince.

PRINCE

I am the Prince. I am. I am.

PRINCESS

(*Taking* BILLY'S *arm*)

Prove it then. (*She drags* BILLY *away a little.*) Teach me how to throw stones. I have a golden ball to play with. (*She takes a golden ball out of her pinafore pocket.*)

PRINCE

Wait till my Fairy Godmother hears of this!

BILLY

(*Taking the ball*)

You are a sissy. This is a pretty jolly ball. (*He throws it to the* PRINCESS.)

PRINCE

(*Almost weeping with rage*)

I'll call the King and Queen — and Nurse.

PRINCESS

(*Running joyfully back and forth as she and* BILLY *throw the ball*)

Don't cry — and muss your curls!

PRINCE

(*Furious*)

Curls yourself! (*He throws himself on the* PRINCESS *and pulls her hair violently.*)

BILLY

(*Pulling him away*)

Drop that!

PRINCE

(*Still clutching the* PRINCESS' *hair and kicking*)

I won't! I won't! I will pull her hair. She's my Princess — and a mean thing to treat me so — and you're a big bully and a donkey. (*He kicks out madly at* BILLY.)

PRINCESS

Beat him up, Billy! (*She jumps up and down.*)

PRINCE

(*Falling on* BILLY)

Donkey! Great ugly donkey!

BILLY

I can't stand that! Donkey yourself. (*He tussles*

with the PRINCE *and throws him.*) You would call me names!

(*The* PRINCE *lies sobbing on the grass,* BILLY *on top of him.*)

PRINCE

You'll be sorry for this!

BILLY

(*Rising and dusting himself*)

You're not hurt really. I only gave you a little punch.

(*The* PRINCE *raises himself just enough to pull a little tin horn out of his sash, and blow a shrill penetrating blast — then throws himself down again.*)

PRINCESS

Oh! Now he *has* done it!

BILLY

What's up!

PRINCESS

You'll see. Look! (*She points to the left.*) It's the King and Queen in the Fairy Tale. Of course he had to go and call them!

(*Through trees at the left come slowly the* KING *and* QUEEN, *very gorgeous in trailing gold and ermine robes. They both wear high spiked gold crowns and the* KING *carries a massive gold scepter. They are followed by two heralds in gold and scarlet, with long*

trumpets, and then six little Princesses in a row. The Princesses are all of a height, with tiny gold crowns on their long light hair, and white gowns reaching to their feet. They wear wide blue sashes, and appear very, very young indeed. Last, comes THE OLD NURSE, *bearing a tray with tea and cakes.*)

THE QUEEN

(*Rather peevishly, as the procession approaches*)

It does seem to me that the Dragon was killed very early to-day. And I had reached such an interesting chapter in my novel.

THE KING

Never mind, my dear. It hardly ever takes more than ten minutes to read the award.

THE QUEEN

The trumpets always make my head ache — and the cannon —

THE KING

Maybe we can omit the cannon to-day.

QUEEN

Oh, do.

PRINCESS

(*Watching the procession as it circles toward her in a stately way*)

They *will* be vexed, when they find out.

BILLY

What's up, especially?

PRINCESS

Everything. It's all twisted and wrong. You're here, and the Prince is there, and the Dragon over there. They *will* be annoyed.

BILLY

Who are they anyhow?

PRINCESS

The King and Queen in the Fairy Tale, of course. And they have the extra princesses with them, and the heralds to trumpet for the defeat of the Dragon and the triumph of the Prince — and look at him. And they do so hate to have anything go wrong!

BILLY

But what is it all about?

PRINCESS

This is the end of a Fairy Tale day, of course. And everything should come out all nice and smooth, and the sunset gun go off to announce at the same time the death for the day of the Dragon, the freeing of the Princess, and the triumph of the Prince — saving gunpowder.

BILLY

So it's a Fairy Tale?

PRINCESS

Of course. I'm in it — and you — and everybody. We're all a Fairy Tale.

BILLY

Not much I'm not. I never did care for Fairy Tales.

PRINCESS

You're in it now.

BILLY

I guess I'll be going. I never had much to do with kings and queens.

(BILLY *starts to go, but the* KING, QUEEN *and the little princesses have made a complete semi-circle around the garden, and he brings up short.*)

KING

(*Putting on spectacles, as he unrolls a scroll in his hand*)

What's this?

PRINCESS

(*Springing after* BILLY, *and seizing his hand*)

It's the new Prince!

OLD NURSE

(*Waddling forward with the tray, and putting it down on the stool at the right*)

Oh — la — la. Something new.

PRINCE

(*Rising with a wail*)

He is not. I am the Prince.

QUEEN

(*Distastefully*)

What a mess he's in.

PRINCE

(*Pointing at* BILLY)

It's all because of him. He knocked me down. He insulted me. He came into the garden uninvited and threw stones. He's nothing but a common boy from outside.

KING

Dear. Dear. This is very tiresome. Where's the Dragon?

DRAGON

(*Rolling himself up painfully*)

Here.

KING

You seem very decently beaten up.

DRAGON

I am.

PRINCESS

And Billy did it. He should be the Prince.

PRINCE

Yes. He came into our garden and threw stones at our Dragon. Throw him out!

QUEEN

(*Taking out a book from a pocket in her dress*)

Why have so much argument?

PRINCESS

I will keep Billy.

PRINCE

But he insulted me, and he is only a common boy, and lives next to a grocer!

PRINCESS

And he beat you up, too. That shows he's a better Prince than you.

PRINCE

But I am the Prince!

KING

Dear. Dear. This is very unusual.

QUEEN

(*Looking up from her book*)

I don't see why it's unusual. It's only in another form. Somebody vanquished the Dragon — and at the same time, the competing Prince. Therefore — that somebody is the real Prince. In disguise, no doubt.

(*She returns to her book*)

KING

(*Doubtfully*)

Do you think so, my love?

QUEEN

Certainly.

PRINCESS

(*Jumping up and down with joy*)

Of course! Of course!

KING

Very well then. Sound the trumpets. (*The heralds lift their horns.*)

PRINCE

But what about me? I am left! Wait till my fairy Godmother hears!

KING

Dear. Dear. This is very upsetting. No one should be left.

QUEEN

(*Dropping her book to look at the* PRINCE)

He can have one of the other Princesses. They look about his height.

KING

(*Doubtfully*)

But I don't like spoiling the set —

QUEEN

One is sure to be snatched by an Ogre or fall into the river sooner or later. She might just as well go with this Prince. The Fairy Tale must be completed. My dear — (*She turns to one of the little Princesses.*) Here is a Prince for you. Curtsey when you're spoken to — and mind you are good to him and keep him dusted. He seems to be bent on making a mess of himself. (*She returns to her book.*)

(*The little* PRINCESS *steps out, looking shyly at the* PRINCE.)

PRINCE

I don't want her. She's a baby.

KING

(*Testily*)

Well — you'll have to take her. You couldn't keep the other. Sound the trumpets.

QUEEN

She's very nice tempered — and had all the proper gifts at christening. A little attention and society will do wonders for her.

KING

Let the cannon boom as the sun sets. (*The heralds sound a blast, and it is followed by a distant boom of cannon.*)

QUEEN

That's enough. (*The heralds put down their horns.*)

KING

(*Adjusting his spectacles, and reading very rapidly from the roll in his hand*)

The Dragon is vanquished. The King and Queen rejoice. The trumpets sound. (*The heralds sound their horns.*) And the cannon —

QUEEN

Not again.

KING

Have boomed. And the Prince — What is your name, young man?

BILLY

Billy Travers.

KING

And the Prince Billy Travers — and the Fairy Princess —

PRINCESS

Margery. I want to be called Margery.

KING

And the Princess Margery lived happily ever after — to the tune of dancing and feasting. (*He rolls up the paper. The heralds sound a blast.*) Let there be dancing and feasting. (*The heralds produce lutes that were slung over their shoulders and play a gay tinkling tune.*)

DRAGON

(*Rolling up to* THE OLD NURSE, *who is standing by the tea tray*)

Did you bring out plenty of comfits?

NURSE

(*Slapping him on the snout*)

Not for you, I didn't.

KING

(*Bowing to* QUEEN)

May I have the honor, my love?

QUEEN

(*Taking his hand*)

Mind you don't step on my train. (*She picks this up over her arm and she and the* KING *dance.*)

PRINCESS

(*Seizing* BILLY'S *hands*)

You dance with me. (*They whirl around.*)

DRAGON

(*Bowing to the* NURSE)

Allow me, Madam.

NURSE

(*Taking his claw and dancing sedately*)

Remember my age.

DRAGON

And my joints. (BILLY *and the* PRINCESS *join them, making a square.*)

PRINCE

(*To the* LITTLE PRINCESS)

Do you dance?

LITTLE PRINCESS

Yeth, pleath. (*They dance with the* KING *and* QUEEN, *making another four.*)

(*The heralds stand at the back, and the other little Princesses dance around the fountain.*)

PRINCE

You're not a hoyden. Are you? I think I like you best anyway.

LITTLE PRINCESS

Yeth, pleath.

QUEEN

(*Stopping*)

There. That's enough. My crown is almost awry, and we must get to supper before the peacock pies are burnt. I faint with hunger.

KING

Sound the trumpets. (*The heralds sound the horns, and turn to go out, followed by the Little Princesses.*)

PRINCE

(*Taking the hand of his* PRINCESS)

We'll sit together at supper; you can save me your owls' tongues if you don't happen to care for them.

PRINCESS

Yeth. Pleath. (*They turn and go out.*)

BILLY

But —

DRAGON

I don't half like this —

QUEEN

No one ever has anything to say after the end.

KING

Good-night, my love. Nurse, see that she goes to bed particularly early after all this unusual excitement. The new Prince may stay to tea with her as a special treat. (*The procession moves slowly off.*)

PRINCESS

(*Jumping up and down*)

Oh, goody! And it does serve that little sissy right to get one of my sisters. They are such babies — and have never said anything but yes — or no — yet!

(*The procession winds out of sight. The twilight deepens in the garden.*)

DRAGON

(*Curling himself up painfully*)

This is beastly rough on me — This is. I don't like my new boxing partner one bit. (*He rolls his eyes at* BILLY.) We'll have to get in a little practice on the side, and I'll show you the right spots.

BILLY

Oh — I won't bother you any more. If — you're polite.

PRINCESS

You'll have to. Every afternoon — and sometimes in the morning. But then we can play with the Golden Ball between times. It will be fun.

BILLY

But I can't stay here, you know.

PRINCESS

(*Running to the tea tray, and dragging it stool and all into the foreground*)

Oh, yes — you must. You will stay here forever and ever — and we will play with the golden ball —

and maybe we'll be allowed to see the fairies dance — if they ever do it before sunset.

BILLY

Excuse me, but I'd rather not.

PRINCESS

Why, what do you mean?

BILLY

I'm — I'm not particularly used to fairies and such.

PRINCESS

Oh, I'll tell you all about it — while we have tea.

BILLY

I don't think I can stay for that.

PRINCESS

You can't stay!

BILLY

Well — it must be about supper time home — and mother'll be expecting me. We're to have hot cakes. Not but what you've been a very jolly little pal — and I thank you and all that.

PRINCESS

But he can't go — Can he, Nurse?

NURSE

(*Who stands, solemnly against the dark cedar*)

The way out of Fairy Land is always open.

BILLY

Yes — that's it. I couldn't live in a Fairy Tale, you know. Now could I? (*He approaches the* PRINCESS, *who looks about to cry.*) I don't look as if I would go into a Fairy Tale — now do I?

PRINCESS

(*Gulping*)

I think you are per-perfectly lovely. And I would love to have you for a Prince. But you don't like me!

BILLY

I do. I think you are a very jolly — really corking Princess — and just as spunky as if you weren't in a silly Fairy Tale at all —

PRINCESS

(*Brightening*)

Oh — do you?

BILLY

Of course I do.

PRINCESS

Perhaps — we'll see each other again someday. Outside, maybe. I don't intend to always live in a Fairy Tale when I grow up.

BILLY

Perhaps we will. Fairy Tales aren't much. Good-by, Princess. (*He holds out his hand.*)

PRINCESS

Margery —

BILLY

Good-by, Margery. (*They shake hands.*)

PRINCESS

Good-by.

(BILLY *turns towards the wood. The* PRINCESS *follows him to the edge.*)

BILLY

(*Turning at the edge of the wood*)

Good-by.

PRINCESS

Wait for me — when you get outside!

BILLY

You bet I will. Good-by. (*He disappears among the trees.*)

PRINCESS

Good-by! (*She waves — until he is out of sight. Then, with a little sob, she breaks down.*) And I haven't any Prince or anything!

DRAGON

(*Uncoiling himself*)

There are always plenty of Fairy Tale Princes. But I dare say you'll run away to this one just the same — Violent tempered creature. You never can tell what will please a woman.

PRINCESS

(*Cheering up, and coming towards him*)

I will. I will.

NURSE

Eat your tea now. There's a good girl. Or the owls and the pixies will get it — it's that late.

(*She moves off, and disappears in the gathering darkness, right. A big yellow moon rises slowly behind the wood. The weird mists and interlacing tree branches and trunks are pricked out with light. The fountain glitters very bright in a shaft of moonlight, that falls on* THE DRAGON, *and gleams on the hair of the* PRINCESS.)

DRAGON

And what about me? Where's my tea?

PRINCESS

You didn't do the right thing at all.

DRAGON

But I did the best I could. Don't I get any comfits? You promised them all to me.

PRINCESS

We will divide them. (*She and* THE DRAGON *sit down to tea.*)

(*From the left,* THE OLD NURSE *is heard singing softly.*)

"A brownie stealeth from the vine,

Singing, ' Heigho, my dearie,
And will you hear this song of mine —
A song of the land of murk and mist
Where bideth the bud the dew hath kissed?
Then let the moonbeams' web of light
Be spun before thee silvery white,
And I shall sing the livelong night —
Heigho — my dearie! ' "

[CURTAIN]

FOR OUTDOOR PRODUCTION OF THE PRINCESS IN THE FAIRY TALE

Any garden, or any woodland, can of course be used for this play. The setting given is only a suggestion, and naturally could not be achieved in anything but an indoor production.

For an outdoor garden production, the initial entrance of the Princess, the Nurse and the Dragon, could be made in a sort of little procession through the garden. The Princess first, sewing as she walks, the Nurse following, singing softly, and the Dragon trailing grumpily some distance behind. They could take their places, the Nurse and the Princess on their little stools, and the Dragon sleeping by the fountain and the play start just as it is given.

For a final exit, the Princess and the Dragon could walk off hand in hand, the Princess holding the tea tray, and the Dragon eating a cake as he walks.

MOTHER GOOSE GARDEN

MOTHER GOOSE GARDEN

SCENE. *A garden.*
TIME. *A summer afternoon.*

CHARACTERS

People of Mother Goose Inn

MOTHER GOOSE.
MOTHER HUBBARD.
SIMPLE SIMON.
MARY, MARY, QUITE CONTRARY.
LITTLE TOMMY TUCKER.

Wayfarers

THE TROUBADOUR.
THE TROUBADOUR'S LADY.
CAPTAIN ADVENTURE.
HERO.
VICTORIA.
H. JAMES.
AINSLEE MCCLURE.

MOTHER GOOSE GARDEN

THE scene is a garden with a fountain in the center. The grass is very green, and the ring of flowers around the fountain pool bright with color. Behind the garden is a woodland, and a little white gate leads into it from the garden. A wooden sign painted in gay colors, swings on a post by the gate. The sign depicts a white goose, with a high peaked black hat, against a scarlet background. Beneath it is printed in clear white letters. MOTHER GOOSE INN. WELCOME. *A bell and a rope hang under this. There is a little painted table in the garden, some painted chairs, and a prim little bench under a cedar tree.*

MARY *comes through the little green arbor at the left into the garden, bearing a watering pot, and begins to sprinkle the flower beds, humming. She is a trim little person in a flowered dress, and frilly white mop cap. The head of an old lady in a white cap tied with long strings appears around the corner of the arbor, and* SIMON *comes out of the arbor quickly.* SIMON *is very tall and lanky, dressed in tight shabby brown, twirls his cap in his fingers, toes in, and wears his thin fair hair long.*

OLD LADY

(*Calling after* SIMON)

Now mind you bring plenty of Pies, Simple Simon. The larder is quite bare of them.

SIMON

(*With a flourish*)

"Pat-a-cake — Pat-a-cake Bakers' man, Bake me a cake as fast as you can. Pat it, and prick it, and mark it with T, And there will be enough —"

OLD LADY

"Jack be nimble Jack be quick, Jack jump over the candlestick!" Go along with you — and don't stop to listen to Tom the Piper's son — on the way.

SIMON

I'll fly — Mother Hubbard. "Handy spandy Jack a Dandy — Loves plum cake and sugar candy. He bought some at a baker's shop, And out he came — Hop-hop-hop!" (*He emphasizes this with great hops of his long legs. The* OLD LADY *draws in her head.* SIMON *skips over the grass, singing.*) "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary, How does your garden grow? With silver bells and cockle shells, And Pretty Maids all in a row!" (*He chucks* MARY *under the chin.*)

MARY

(*Giving him a push*)

You are a Simple Simon. How Mother Goose can ever run her Inn with you doing her errands — is a riddle to me!

SIMON

"Riddle-me, riddle me, riddle me ree —" Mother Goose is a wise old lady. She knows the value of Simples, like Simple Simon, and keeps them busy. (*He nods his head.*)

MARY

Busy enough. (*She waters the flowers diligently.*) Those who work in Mother Goose Inn find plenty to do. What with Old King Cole calling for everything all at once, and Jack and Jill having to be patched up every minute — and all the children of the Old Woman who Lives in a Shoe to be fed hot broth — there never was such a busy Inn as Mother Goose Inn.

(*Two languishing Italian figures come slowly through the wood, and stop, looking up at the sign. The slim young man has his arm around the girl, and she is enveloped in a torn purple and scarlet cloak, which hides all but her bare feet in broken sandals, and a rough plait of reddish hair. The man has a gipsy face with long dark curls. His clothes are dirty and torn, but of lovely old reds and blues, and worn with grace. He carries a broken lute over one shoulder. They both limp a little, and are plainly exhausted.*)

YOUTH

(*Leaning over the gate, and speaking in a sonorous voice*)

Hail — happy folk within a garden,

SIMON

Customers, Mary.

MARY

(*Turning quickly*)

Good-day, pretty Sir, Good-day, pretty Lady. (*She drops a curtsy.*)

YOUTH

Hast thou seen, maiden, a fountain in this green wood — a fountain springing all purpled from the earth, purpled and filled with crimson lights of love, and gushing up till it licks the stars — like a great flame?

SIMON

(*Who has listened, enthralled*)

Indeed sir, and how can a fountain which is water, be a flame, which is fire?

YOUTH

(*Turning melancholy eyes on* SIMON)

I see that you have not drunk of it, for you do not understand poetry. He who drinks that fountain shall live forever bathed in the golden light of poetry which is the quicksilver of the fountain.

SIMON

Did you say gold, Sir, or silver?

YOUTH

(*Rapturously*)

Gold and silver — and thousands of great purple

stars! Have you seen such a fountain, or know of any one to direct us?

SIMON

There is the Pieman. He goes to every house — for every man must eat.

THE LADY

(*From the shoulder of the* YOUTH)

Alas, Alas. They know not of the fountain.

YOUTH

The world is full of commonplace and gluttony while we fast by the wayside.

MARY

I don't know of any fountain — such as you describe — but I can give you a drink of water. And something to eat. Mother Goose Inn always satisfies its customers.

YOUTH

(*Leading the* LADY *in through the gate*)

Not water. Wine. Scarlet wine. Hot with spices. (*He and his* LADY *sit limply on the bench under the cedar tree.*) Spices to revive the soul of the Troubadour — and his Lady.

MARY

(*Uncertainly*)

We have ale — for Old King Cole —

YOUTH

(*Waving a long hand*)

Anything — Anything — that sparkles and has color. (MARY *hurries off through the arbor.*) The world is very evil and dark and the thorns are sharp. No one heeds us. We must drink from what cup we can, to wet our parched lips.

SIMON

(*Approaching with a wave of his cap at the fountain*)

That water there is very wet, Sir. Jack and Jill once spilled a whole pail full, and Polly Flinders built a fire to dry them —

YOUTH

Peace — gangling fool. (*He slings his broken lute from his shoulders.*) Hark, I will sing to my beloved, of the Fountain we seek.

(SIMPLE SIMON *sits down cross legged, and watches them, open mouthed... The* LADY *sighs, and throws back the hood of her cloak, revealing a wan white face between the red braids. The* TROUBADOUR *sings to the lute with great difficulty because half the strings are gone.*)

Fountain — Fountain — which springs from the earth to make all men young — fountain, silver fountain — which quenches all fires — as it lights them —

SIMON

That is not possible.

YOUTH

Silver — silver fountain — Giver of Eternal Life

— Let the Troubadour find in your silver — silver for his pocket — silver for his soul — silver for his crown — lest the world forget him and he dies —

LADY

Alas — Alas.

YOUTH

Lest the world forget him — (*A string of the lute snaps. He stops and glares at* SIMON *who has scrambled to his feet.*) How dare you interrupt!

SIMON

I thought you were finished, Sir — when you said "He dies."

TROUBADOUR

(*With a melodramatic spring to his feet*)

Yes. I die. I die. The Troubadour of all Romances — the wanderer through Golden Italy — France of the Lilies, and England of Arthur's Knights — I perish. My lute is broken. No one will listen to my songs. (*He sinks down and buries his face in his hands.*)

LADY

No. No. Beloved. We will find the fountain — and drink of eternal life. Others have found it. Why not the Troubadour?

TROUBADOUR

(*His face still buried*)

What is wrong with my songs that they go unheeded? Why cannot I sing — and the water spring

from the earth like a living flame in answer to my voice?

SIMON

(*Standing before them — troubled — twisting his cap*)

It seems to me, Sir — that your song has too much of refrain in it — and too little matter. Perhaps people would like it more if it had more matter — for instance — (*He starts to sing.*) — "Mary Had a Little Lamb. Its fleece was white as snow. And everywhere that Mary went —" (*The* TROUBADOUR *springs wildly to his feet.* SIMON *retreats a step, but still regards him with a deprecatory smile.*) Now there's a neat little song.

TROUBADOUR

(*In a husky voice, feeling for the dagger at his belt*)

I will not stay to be insulted. You shall not live to do it. My ancestors were of Boccaccio — Villon — Angelotti — (*He raises his dagger —*)

(*During this last speech, a burly figure has pushed its way through the gate into the garden. He is evidently a Sea Captain from his great boots, and weather beaten face framed with brass earrings... He wears, however, a huge shabby velvet hat, with many draggled plumes, awry over the red kerchief binding his head. His suit is of dark, stained and dirty velvet, with a great red sash full of pistols and cutlasses. He advances with a swaggering*

stride, and seizes the uplifted hand of the TROUBADOUR.)

ADVENTURE

Odd's blood — What's this? No murder here — and Captain Adventure on the deck! (*He wrenches the dagger away.* THE TROUBADOUR *shrinks back.* THE CAPTAIN *wipes the dagger with a bright red and yellow handkerchief and sticks it in his belt.*) A pretty toy. (MARY *has come out with a tray containing a pitcher, and two goblets.* THE CAPTAIN *seizes the pitcher as she comes up to him.*) Yo — ho. Rum! (*He drains the pitcher.* THE TROUBADOUR *and his* LADY *shrink together.*)

TROUBADOUR

Ruffian!

LADY

(*Clinging*)

Beloved. Touch him not. We would live to drink of the fountain.

ADVENTURE

(*Setting the pitcher back on the tray with a bang, and wiping his long mustache*)

A mild drink. But bring more. I'll pay in doubloons. Never say — Adventure is a thief! (*He swings himself down into a wooden chair, his legs stretched straight out in front of him.* MARY *goes out again with the tray.*)

SIMON

(*Nervously*)

But the wine belonged to the other gentleman. The one with the dagger — you know.

ADVENTURE

(*Contemptuously*)

Such sucklings should have neither weapons nor drink.

LADY

(*Caressingly to the* TROUBADOUR. *They have sunk down on the bench*)

Heed him not, beloved. One can see he is only a tramp — an outcast from the world whose words and deeds are not hearkened to. He will never reach the fountain. (*She leans against the* TROUBADOUR'S *shoulder. He whispers in her ear, and picks on his lute.*)

ADVENTURE

(*Fishing a couple of gold coins out of his pocket and carelessly tossing them up in the air*)

Tell me — young cockerel — hast seen a fresh water spring hereabouts? In a cave it would like to be, or in the heart of a volcano. Very like it is guarded by a ruffianly band of smugglers — those whos' captain has a black patch over one eye. But Adventure will throttle them. S'Death I will throw them all single handed — and when securely bound, make them walk the plank into the cold sea — for the sharks. Ha — Ha!

SIMON

(*Who has been listening breathlessly*)

From the volcano — sir?

ADVENTURE

What is a volcano more or less to Adventure?

(*He seizes the jug again from the tray of* MARY *who has just returned. She takes it from him, just as he is about to drink from it, pours out a glass for him, and turns towards* THE TROUBADOUR.)

ADVENTURE

A sly wench that — and neat. (*He takes her wrist as she turns.*) Wench — have those bright eyes — seen a little clear water freshet hereabouts — It would belike be on a sandy shore near a spot of buried treasure — where no foot of man had ever trod before.

SIMON

Who was it you say buried the treasure — Sir?

ADVENTURE

Answer — or know the weight of Adventure's wrath. Hast thou a map with a cross at such a Spring?

MARY

No, Sir. There is only the well that Jack and Jill draw water from every morning —

ADVENTURE

Foiled! Foiled again! That Adventure should

come to such a pass, that he should look for a little Spring of fresh water — wandering on the highroads looking for fresh water — when the breath of his life is the salt wave — the salt spray — the salt wind —

(*There is a jangle of the bell under the sign, and* MARY, *who has been helping* THE TROUBADOUR *to wine, hurries towards it.*)

But I tell you — varlet —

(*He glares at* SIMON, *who stands, fascinated, his toes turning in and his mouth open.*)

If I do not find that Spring I shall soon die — strangulate — perish — Captain Adventure will rot as the beasts that perish in the desert islands. I who have sailed the salt wave —

(MARY *comes forward, supporting an almost fainting lady, in full white skirts and a blue ribboned scoop bonnet that completely hides her face. A reticule dangles limply from her inert black-mitted hand. A dapper gentleman, his fawn color trousers, and tight lavender coat, much the worse for travel and frayed at the edges, follows anxiously. He carries a huge beaver hat of fuzzy fawn color in one hand, and a neat little carpet bag in the other. His light curls are very beautiful, and his frills once, no doubt, impressive.*)

THE LADY

(*In a faint murmur*)

Salt — yes — salts — where are my salts — I must have them.

(MARY *sits her in a chair and produces a bottle of salts from* THE LADY'S *reticule. The* GENTLEMAN *leans over the back of the chair and solicitously gives* THE LADY *her salts.*)

GENTLEMAN

My dearest Victoria. I indeed grieve that the road has fatigued you. (*He turns to* MARY.) My good girl. Could you perhaps find in this excellent and worthy Inn some sustenance for this lady? She is faint.

SIMON

We have good Jack Horner Pies for the hungry. And Queen of Heart's Tarts too —

VICTORIA

(*Feebly, brushing away the suggestion*)

I am not hungry at all. I am never hungry. Sometimes I take a little berry or a bit of lettuce leaf — merely for appearances.

ADVENTURE

(*In a jovial roar — holding out a goblet of ale*)

Rum. That's what you need, m'am. Rum.

VICTORIA

(*Collapsing*)

Oh — the great rough — man. My dearest Hero, is there not some way of avoiding all this dreadful publicity? Is there not some quiet modest little corner where the roses grow, that we can retire to in peace? We, who have but so lately started on our

life's journey — if indeed — (*She produces a handkerchief and delicately touches her eyes*) we finish it together?

HERO

Can you not see, Sir, that there is a lady present, and she of delicate mold — and fainting?

MARY

Let me get her some curds and whey now. It's very nourishing, and delicate too. And some Curly-Locks strawberries with sugar and cream. (*She turns to go off.*)

HERO

Bring me some black-bird pie. And here's sixpence for yourself, my good girl. (MARY *curtseys and goes out through the arbor.*)

VICTORIA

(*Faintly*)

I thirst. Let me lean against your arm, Hero.

TROUBADOUR'S LADY

(*Leaning over gently offering her a cup*)

Will you have some of my wine — lady? It is sweet to the taste, and refreshing as warm new milk and Saints' tears.

VICTORIA

(*Shrinking away*)

No, thank you. (*She turns her bonnet up to* HERO.) My dearest Hero, do you think this garden is quite proper? I don't think I quite approve of the way they speak.

HERO

My dearest Victoria, it is all very distressing. But we will soon find the fountain and our troubles in life will be past.

VICTORIA

(*Resorting to her handkerchief*)

Oh, my dearest Hero — if we do not find the fountain we shall perish! We are already shabby with hardly enough money for our tombstones. It is hardly genteel! And we on our honeymoon!

TROUBADOUR

(*Embracing his* LADY)

We too are lovers. We live on the red fruits of love.

VICTORIA

(*With a gasp*)

Hero — I am sure they are not proper! Let us leave! (*She arranges her bonnet and reticule.*)

MARY

But madam, Polly has not even put the kettle on yet. There's nothing like a good hot dish to bring folks together — Why, Jack Sprat and his wife only got together over their dinners —

VICTORIA

So material. So middle class. Hero, dearest, ask her the way. I am so helpless in asking directions.

SIMON

Like the three blind mice —

VICTORIA

(*With a little shriek*)

Ooh! (*She clings to* HERO, *nervously pulling him away.*)

HERO

My excellent maid, can you tell me if there is a palace in this wood?

MARY

(*Arranging the table*)

There is the Sleeping Beauty Palace, Sir — but the way is thorny.

TROUBADOUR

(*Soulfully in an undertone to his lute*)

The thorns may circle our path but their points will but show us our way pricked in red drops of blood —

SIMON

(*Edging up*)

I know a song something like that — "There was a man in our town, and he was wondrous wise. He jumped into a bramble bush and scratched out both his eyes — But when he saw his eyes were out — With all his might and main — He jumped into another bush — And scratched them in again."

TROUBADOUR

Peace, bleating fool. We speak of poetry — and song —

SIMON

Like Tom — the piper's son —

VICTORIA

(*To* HERO)

My love. That might be the palace.— Sleeping Beauty, a fashionable cure no doubt — and the place for fountains. Ah, and we would endure any thorns to reach this fountain. Did you say, my dear, that it was a beautiful Crystal Palace? I am sure it would be in a Crystal Palace that the fountain would be found.

SIMON

(*Helpfully*)

There is the glass house where we throw stones.

VICTORIA

(*Eagerly*)

Is it very beautifully furnsihed with lambrequins and antimacassars and red plush chairs, and tables with albums?

HERO

(*Clasping her*)

Just as we will furnish our own home, Victoria!

VICTORIA

The fountain will be in the front hall, springing from a gilt statue with a lamp — surrounded by a fret work of iron and red glass — The fountain coming from Nature's heart — and going on forever like dear Lord Alfred's brook —

SIMON

How does the brook go round the red chairs, ma'm?

VICTORIA

Will it not be perfect joy — my own? We will drink of it, and live forever in the Crystal Palace. I faint to think of it. (*She applies her salts.*) Such bliss!

ADVENTURE

(*Pulling his chair up to the table, and plunging into the pie* MARY *has just put down*)

Flumdiddle! Brick-a-brack! S'blood!

(TROUBADOUR *and his* LADY *draw up timidly at the opposite side of the table.*)

HERO

(*Picking up his carpet bag*)

Have you seen such a fountain and such a palace, my good fellow?

SIMON

(*Rubbing one leg on the other*)

No, Sir. (*He rushes awkwardly to the table and pours out some water from a flagon for* ADVENTURE.) Will you have some water, Sir — fresh drawn from Pussy's well?

ADVENTURE

(*Knocking the flagon over with a sweep of his elbow*)

Rum! Rum! Enough for Fifteen Men — and one dead one! Do I harry the rolling sea in ships — to drink water!

SIMON

(*Picking up the flagon, in a gentle murmur*)

"Three wise men of Gotham — went to sea in a bowl —

If the bowl had been stronger — my tale had been longer —"

(*There has come in through the gate, during this conversation, a stoutish* GENTLEMAN, *rather elderly, with thinning hair, and bone glasses. He is dressed in a greenish shabby suit of antique cut, and is so engrossed in his own meditations, with his head bent, and his hands behind him, that he runs right into* HERO *and* VICTORIA, *who are standing uncertainly, whispering together.*)

GENTLEMAN

Oh — I solicit your pardon, I'm sure, in that I have intruded myself all inadvertently, not to say more particularly unwittingly, upon yourselves — that is to say your corporeal selves, for your spiritual selves have that thing which is known as rare collisions in man or woman —

ADVENTURE

(*In a roar*)

Meat — More Meat! S'Death! Is this an Inn or an empty hogshead — that I cannot find Meat!

MARY

There was only one bone in the cupboard, Sir — when Mother Hubbard the housekeeper looked, and that the dog took.

ADVENTURE

Then I will pick it with some one. You, Sir!

(*He roars at the* GENTLEMAN *just arrived.*) What do you mean standing there in my light? Who are you?

GENTLEMAN

(*Deprecatingly, looking at* ADVENTURE *over his glasses*)

My name is James, Sir. As a matter of fact — I was hardly aware of what light I stood in — I must crave your indulgence. I am prone to be absent-minded. That is — I am often searching for my verbs — and in the midst of these cogitations, or ramifications, or I might state perambulations —

ADVENTURE

Say what you mean!

JAMES

(*With a sigh*)

I wish I could, Sir. In these days when many are apt to even overlook the name of James, which is a lofty name, Sir, I frequently get lost even in my own sentences. But this I think (*he looks around to collect an audience*), is a particularly good one. (*He brings his hands out from behind his back and begins to expound.*) I — ah — am in search of a fount. I believe it could be called a fount — or perhaps would be even better termed a Spring as the Pierean is, Spring then —

(*There is a jangle of the bell under the sign, and there enters through the gate a lurid young woman in an abbreviated scarlet dress, with a black picture hat, and very high heeled shoes.*

She carries a great white muff. Her dress is cut extremely low back and front, and she wears dangling earrings and much makeup.)

GIRL

(*In a drawly twang, as she saunters in*)

Say you — is this Road House a dead one? I've been tintillating that clapper till my fingers feel like a Swedish massage. (*She advances — swaying.*)

VICTORIA

(*Clinging to* HERO)

We really must go, my dearest Hero.

HERO

I always did fancy red. (*He smiles politely at the girl and offers her a chair.*)

VICTORIA

Hero!

GIRL

(*Sinking into the chair*)

Thanks, old dear. (*She motions to* SIMON.) Here, boy — Smokes and a Bronx and rush. I'm beat up. This tramping the curb looking for a cold cream geyser has me bleating for refreshment. When I get to that fountain of eternal debutantness I'll keep it in a non-detachable cup. (*She takes out a vanity case and powders her nose.*)

SIMON

(*Intensely fascinated*)

In there?

GIRL

(*Snapping the case to*)

No. Funny face. But can you give me the address of the beauty parlor here-a-bouts that puts on the permanent youth? It ought to be a swell joint by the line of exclusiveness it hands out. Not even a card to me, Ainslee McClure, and me with my profile on every magazine that has a circulation — and my story running in no less than five hundred movies at once. But it's wearing — and you never can tell where the public will jump. I may find myself next month in the eight by ten cell of a Second Class Vaudeville boarding house in Hoboken, so just tip me off with the number of this beauty bath. Will you? I want that bath.

VICTORIA

The immodest hussy! (*She hides her face in her handkerchief.*) Hero, this is not respectable!

AINSLEE

I'll have you know I'm a perfect lady. (*She surveys* VICTORIA *up and down.*) Even if I don't dress like a Newark sewing-by-the-day model. My virtue is absolutely O K. The final paragraph always tells you that. Hit 'em in the eye and then soften up afterwards is my motto.

SIMON

Can they see just the same if you hit them in the eye?

AINSLEE

They can't miss me. Any one got a light? (*She*

takes out a cigarette from a gold case.) This hunting a fountain is the thirstiest work I've ever pulled. (*She leans over and lights her cigarette at* ADVENTURE'S *pipe which he has just started.*) Thanks, Pal. You look like an actor out of a job.— Copped your overcoat out of the wardrobe room, didn't you? (*She leans back, and surveys the* TROUBADOUR *and his* LADY *through a puff of smoke.*) And you too. What's your particular line?

TROUBADOUR

I am the Troubadour. Through the centuries I sing of Love and Poetry. Though the world is deaf, its ears stopped with sordid moneys — I sing — I sing —

SIMON

Like Little Tommy Tucker — Singing for his supper —

AINSLEE

Well, it doesn't look as if you'd got much off the lunch counter. If you've been on the road long, no wonder you're starved.

TROUBADOUR

Starved for appreciation — starved for recognition. The world has forgotten us — and our songs. Soon we will perish and be but ghosts and mist wraiths if we cannot find the Great Fountain to drink of.

ADVENTURE

(*Gloomily*)

I must soon drink of something more potent than

rum and stiffer then a hurricane, or Adventure will founder with all hands and the seas close over him. I can find no one these days to man my ships or listen to my tales.

JAMES

(*Waking a little from his melancholy ruminations*)

It is indeed difficult to find a listener in the hustling world which goes by all unheeding — unheeding my voice which used to lead it through the labyrinth of culture —

AINSLEE

(*To* MARY, *who stands by sympathetically*)

Say — is this a home for Down and Outs?

MARY

(*Smoothing her apron*)

This is Mother Goose Inn, ma'm. It's a home for Mother Goose, ma'm, and all her children, and all her willing servants, of which I am one. (*She bobs a curtsey.*) And we keep open house, ma'm, to serve any one as comes by and likes simple things like Pat-a-cakes, and hot Pease Porridge, and Daffy-Down-Dillies. There's many as might fare worse, ma'm, than on Mother Goose and her Goodies. She is a wise old lady.

SIMON

" There was an old woman lived under a hill —
And if she's not gone she lives there still —
Baked apples she sold and cranberry pies —
And she's the old woman that never told lies —"

(*He emphasizes this last line with very emphatic nods of his head.*)

AINSLEE

Mother Goose, eh? I never heard of her, but I don't think much of her stage name.

ADVENTURE

(*In a deep rumble*)

Nor the milk pap she serves.

TROUBADOUR'S LADY

(*Leaning out*)

It is a sweet garden — but no high stars in it. You should build towers to reach the stars — (*She waves a thin white hand.*) Should they not — my Troubadour?

TROUBADOUR

Indeed. Towers to reach the stars — my blessed damozel. By towers and stars are Troubadours remembered.

SIMON

(*Pensively*)

" Twinkle — twinkle, little star —
How I wonder what you are —"

JAMES

(*Who has sunk down by the table, engrossed in a book. He looks up*)

Yes — a nice obvious little enclosure — but nothing of the higher intellectuality in its atmosphere —

Why not give lectures on the greater Mentality twice a week at four? It would improve the place. Improve it greatly — (*He returns to his book.*)

AINSLEE

(*Polishing her nails*)

A little jazz is all you need, and perhaps a bit of cabaret stuff — and let me tip you off to a decent press agent. There's nothing like it. But as it is — (*She looks around and shrugs.*) Dead.

VICTORIA

(*Who has stood, clinging to* HERO *all this time*)

I should say a few gladiolas and perhaps a tame doe or two — like Lord Ronald brought his cousin, my Hero. (*She sighs.*) It is indeed hard to be so highly related, and yet have to enter a middle class little Inn.

MARY

There are those that like Mother Goose Inn.

SIMON

And they Great People too sometimes. They say there is no fountain water as clear as ours, no milk as sweet, and no garden flowers as bright.

AINSLEE

A week end back to Nature. I see. But I haven't the time to waste, Long-Legs. My schedule is full. Have you got a road map or a timetable to show the where-a-bouts of this Beauty Parlor I'm after?

MARY

There's the road to Bambury Cross, but you'd better go there horse-back, and it's three score ten miles to Babylon, though you can get there by candle-light. And there's Gloster, though it's apt to be rainy, where Dr. Foster always goes — but I never heard of the Beauty Parlor you speak of.

ADVENTURE

Nor of the hidden Spring in the secret island that I must find — I'll be bound. A wretched, weak-kneed lot.

TROUBADOUR

Nor of the purpled cataract that licks the moon. The moon does not shine on this garden.

SIMON

One of our cows once jumped over the moon. Hey-diddle-Diddle's cow it was.

VICTORIA

Nor have they heard of our Crystal Palace. (*She weeps into her handkerchief.*) And we will pass away if we do not find it!

HERO

(*Petting her*)

My dearest Victoria, whatever happens, we will be genteel.

JAMES

(*Looking up*)

That word. That word. I must rouse myself.

It is the grave of all intellectuality, and I approach it if I do not find the remedy I seek. (*He puts his book in his pocket.*) Tell me, young woman. (*He turns to* MARY.) How can I find the way to the fount that I seek? I believe it is almost a metaphorical fount, being merely the flow of wisdom and words which emanates from some great soul, for the best things are always clothed in metaphors. Have you seen such a great soul as would give strength to a poor dealer in words — for alas, that is what I am. The world is passing me by, and as its strength ebbs away from me, I feel I have only dry words left. And I would live again.

SIMON

(*Edging up sympathetically*)

If I were you, Sir, I would ask the others you meet on the road. They be simple folk, but might tell you something. Some are peddlers like yourself — like the Pieman, and there's even the Pussy Cat who's been to London and seen the Queen, and Wee Willie Winkie, who runs through the towns at night. He knows a great deal.

JAMES

(*With a weary sigh*)

But I am very weary and confused. My words seem to trip me —

SIMON

It might depend on how you start, Sir —" There was a crooked man, and he went a crooked mile — and he found a crooked sixpence —"

ADVENTURE

(*Interrupting with a roar*)

And are any of these travelers seafaring men? Do they know of the Far Volcano with the inner hidden spring I seek?

SIMON

There's Robinson Crusoe Island, Sir. But that's pretty well explored. And then there's Bobby Shaftoe — He went to sea — Silver buckles on his knee. Pretty Bobby Shaftoe.

ADVENTURE

(*Springing up*)

S'Blood! I'll not be choked with Nursery Tales. Where is that island of mine?

TROUBADOUR

(*Getting up, and approaching, with his* LADY)

No. First where is our fountain of scarlet and purple? It grows late. The mists fill the woods, and the troubadour perishes of the cold and dark unless he warms his throat with the drink of the eternal purple fountain.

VICTORIA

And it's a fountain we seek too — in a Palace. Surely every one knows the way to the Crystal Palace — It must be there.

AINSLEE

Speed it up — Kid. Give me the number and I'll whistle for a taxi. All I want is the address of the Permanent Beauty Parlor —

JAMES

(*Pressing on* MARY)

Just one moment, my worthy girl, if you will be so kind as to direct me to the fount —

MARY

(*Bewildered*)

Please — sirs — Please, ma'm — Please kindly. One at a time.

SIMON

I never knew there were so many different fountains, Sir. I never knew any fountain but this, Sir.

ADVENTURE

Brainless jelly-fish!

TROUBADOUR

Poor innocent!

JAMES

You are unenlightened, my simple child —

SIMON

What is the name of your Fountain, Sir? You find so many names, I should think you would hardly know it yourself, Sir.

JAMES

The name, my good boy, the simple name which in innocence, was given to the miraculous fountain which cures all ills, and is no doubt now clad in quite another and more subtle guise, is the Fountain of Youth. It is that, alas — which I seek.

VICTORIA

What! Hero! I faint! (*She collapses into* HERO'S *arms.*) Our fountain! We will have to share the crystal Palace, and not live there in an eternal honeymoon. I cannot bear it!

HERO

(*Clutching her*)

Brace yourself in this serious crisis, Victoria.

TROUBADOUR

The Fountain of Youth! It is that Fountain we seek! The Purple Cataract which springs to the stars — No one but Poets dare find it — No one but Lovers can drink it —

ADVENTURE

S'Blood! Will you discover my Island and my Spring before I do? The Fountain of Youth. 'Twas the very Name. The very Fount I seek. Who has revealed the secret — Who — that I may slit his throat! (*He glares about with his hand on his cutlass.*)

AINSLEE

Say — Bring the check — I'll be trotting. The Fountain of Youth! Why, that's the name of the Permanent Beauty Joint I'm looking for. Don't tell me you're all going there too. Not but what a little cold cream and curling irons wouldn't help you — but I don't want the hours all booked up, and the right syrup in the fountain run out, before I get there. So long — Old dears — (*She starts to go.*)

VICTORIA

Hero! Don't let her go! That kind always supersedes us! (*She weeps, and pulls* HERO *towards the gate.*)

AINSLEE

(*Pushing past her*)

That kind indeed! I guess the Fountain of Youth is free to whoever finds it — and me a perfect lady!

ADVENTURE

(*Elbowing past them both*)

Adventure is ever first on the field!

JAMES

If you will allow me. I think I must be departing. That fountain is really a necessity to me —

TROUBADOUR

(*Leading his* LADY *out*)

It is the wine of Life to the Troubadour. Without it I perish. Already I stagger by the way —

ADVENTURE

(*Thrusting them aside*)

Sentimental rubbish! Oblivion waits for you — (*He glares about.*) And for all else that is not red-blooded. I am hearty with oaths. I am thick with energy. One drop from the Fountain of Youth is all that Adventure needs to make him and his Tales live forever — Out of my way. And stay here till I am gone — or your heads will answer for it —

JAMES

(*Tremulously*)

But culture — culture and language — that cannot wait while a Penny Melodrama eats up the precious fluid which would give life to me — and my many, many words —

AINSLEE

Can the rough stuff — and the high-brow too. Do you think Ainslee McClure can wait? Why the public may even now be dropping me. This is on the level. I need that Fountain cure.

TROUBADOUR

(*Hastily dragging his* LADY *away from the crowd and towards the gate*)

Come. Avante. Avante. Before the vulgar mob drinks the Poet's fountain dry and leaves the Troubadour to perish.

SIMON

(*Blocking his way*)

But, kind Sir — Have you any penny?

MARY

Yes — please, Sir — you have eaten of our Black Bird Pie and drunk our King Cole Ale —

TROUBADOUR

(*With a wild gesture, making for the gate and pushing her aside*)

We have sung for it. We have no money —

TROUBADOUR'S LADY

The Fountain — the Fountain. I must reach it or I faint — Water — water —

MARY

Running to her solicitously)

Oh, I am sorry. We will not charge anything if you have no penny. But will you not rest and have a drink of our fountain water? It is so cool — and clear —

TROUBADOUR

It must be Purple shot with stars — Farewell, Simple Maid. (*He goes out the gate.*) We were but beggars that came to your door — But when we drink of the Fountain of Youth we return kings! (*They go off through the wood.*)

ADVENTURE

Here — stop there. S'blood! S'death! S'blood! They escape me! (*He starts after them.*)

SIMON

(*Stopping him*)

But you, Sir, have a penny. And you had Jack Horner Pie, and a Plum Pudding too. The Lion beat the Unicorn all round the town for less —

ADVENTURE

And I'll beat you all round the town unless you stand aside. Here — (*He plunges his hands and throws out some coins.*) Doubloons — Pieces of Eight — Spanish Gold! What are they to Adven-

ture if he loses the Fountain of Youth and founders in oblivion? You, who would keep him with milk and water! S'blood! S'death! I am not a beggar — ye dogs! (*He strides out.*)

SIMON

" Hark — hark, the dogs do bark, the beggars have come to town. Some in rags and some in tags, and some in velvet gown —"

JAMES

If you will pardon me — I must really journey forward in search of the flow of Youth which comes from the Fountain — I —

VICTORIA

Dearest Hero. Lend me your arm.

JAMES

(*Getting to the gate*)

Good-day, Good-day.

MARY

(*Running after him*)

But will you not wait and ask Mother Goose, Sir? She is very old, Sir, and very wise?

JAMES

Nursery Tales. Nursery Tales. (*He goes off through the wood shaking his head.*)

VICTORIA

Quick — Dearest Hero. Those dreadful people

will drink our fountain and turn us out of our own Crystal Palace —

SIMON

But, ma'm, you have not eaten your curds and whey — and Miss Muffit made it especially for you —

AINSLEE

(*Seizing the opportunity to push by to the gate*)
So long — then. I'm off.

MARY

Don't you think you might perhaps stay, ma'm? So many are going — and we have such a nice little fountain here. And if you all go off I don't know what I will say to Mother Goose, and she so particular about accounts and all — Don't you think, ma'm, you could try our fountain —

AINSLEE

Nothing doing. Sorry. Tell the Old Lady I had a date. (*She goes off hastily through the wood.*)

SIMON

(*Ruminatively*)

"The greedy man is he who sits
And bites bits out of plates —
Or else takes up an almanac
And gobbles all the dates —"

That Captain — broke a plate. (*He carefully picks up the pieces of a plate that* ADVENTURE *shoved off the table in his hurry.*) And a flagon too. To

say nothing of spilling all the water worse than Jack and Jill — and he only left three bits —

VICTORIA

(*At the gate with* HERO)

Good-by. I will send you a little gilt souvenir from the Crystal Palace.

MARY

But please, ma'm. Have you a penny for your curds and whey?

VICTORIA

We come of the best families and are always guests. We never pay. The Fountain of Youth receives only the best families — however unfortunate they may be in circumstances — (*She begins to sniff.*)

HERO

But always genteel —

VICTORIA

Yes — always that — until the end. Oh, hurry, Hero. I feel very faint. We must find the Fountain of Youth or I will actually swoon! (*They go off through the wood.*)

SIMON

(*Softly to himself, rubbing one leg against the other, and looking after* HERO *and* VICTORIA.)

"Goosey — goosey Gander — Wither dost thou wander?"

MARY

(*Coming distractedly down to the table*)

Oh, now there, Simple Simon. Don't you stand there doing nothing on one leg — and everything in a clutter. (*She begins to pick up the dishes.*) Such crazy people I never did see. And what Mother Goose will say with no account made out — and I declare — (*She turns on him.*) You haven't been to the Pieman yet.

SIMON

"Give me a duck and a drake and a half-penny cake — And a penny to pay the old baker —"

MARY

How can I when nobody paid for their cakes but with three foreign pennies? (*She wrings her hands.*)

(MOTHER GOOSE *enters briskly through the gate. She is clad in a long red cape over her dark dress with its full white apron, and wears the high pointed* MOTHER GOOSE *black hat over her frilled white cap. Her face is wrinkled but pink cheeked and healthy, and though she leans on a stick, she moves briskly and decidedly.*)

MOTHER GOOSE

What's this? What's this? Mary, Mary Contrary, and Simple Simon and the tables all in a clutter? Have we had guests?

SIMON

Yes. And they were so strange. As strange as the Man in the Wilderness who asked how many strawberries grew in the sea?

MOTHER GOOSE

And did you answer as proper, as you have been taught — "As many as red herrings grow in the wood?"

SIMON

I tried, but they all talked at once — They did not seem to care about listening —

MARY

And they wanted to find the oddest place — Crystal Palaces and Volcanos — and Purple Springs —

SIMON

(*With a rush*)

And though they all seemed so different it was the same place they were after after all, though they none of them would admit it, and they were as cross as Cross-Patch when they found out, and all took different roads — And would not stop in our garden —

MOTHER GOOSE

(*Shaking her head*)

Oh — la-la — That's what happens when people's minds get all overgrown and twisted — When they outgrow Mother Goose's garden and don't see what's before their noses —

MARY

(*Breathlessly*)

And they only left three strange foreign pennies for pay —

MOTHER GOOSE

Each man pays in his own coin — and is paid like-

wise. (*She slips the pennies left by* ADVENTURE *in her pocket.*)

MARY

And where were they going —

SIMON

And will they get there?

MOTHER GOOSE

Who knows? "The King of France went up the hill
With twenty thousand men.
The King of France came down the hill,
And ne'er went up again."

The Flower of Hearts Desire grows in this very garden — if they had not traveled too fast and been too wise to see it —

(*There comes a boy's voice singing beyond the gate* —)

VOICE

"Rock-a-by baby, thy cradle is green,
Father's a nobleman, mother's a queen,
And Betty's a lady and wears a gold ring —
And Johnny's a drummer — and drums for the King —"

MARY

It's little Tommy Tucker —

SIMON

Singing for his supper —

MOTHER GOOSE

Shall we give him some —

MARY

Oh, yes — White Bread and Butter —

SIMON

And Diddle, Diddle Dumplings —

MOTHER GOOSE

And water — from Mother Goose's fountain.

MARY

(*Clearing away the table*)

Yes — the others would not drink it —

(*A veil of twilight has crept over the garden, softening the vividness of its green, and filling the wood beyond with mists. Little* TOMMY TUCKER, *a very little boy in blue Greenaway dress, with a wide white neck frill appears at the gate, his hands behind him, singing.*)

TOMMY TUCKER

" Hush-a-by, baby, on the tree top —
When the wind blows the cradle will rock —
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall —
And down will come baby — cradle and all —"

MOTHER GOOSE

They wouldn't drink my fountain — eh? Well — they will find no better one. For this is the fountain of all young things and those who drink of Mother

Goose's fountain never grow old — never grow old. I suppose that was not what they wanted — eh?

SIMON

(*Twisting on one leg*)

They didn't seem to know exactly what they wanted.

MOTHER GOOSE

Ah, well — there are many springs to the Fountain of Youth — but this in my garden is the first one. My children are forever young. Are they all safe — Is Little Boy Blue home from the Haystacks? Has Bo-Peep brought in her sheep?

SIMON

Yes — but Daffy-down-dilly has not finished her new yellow dress — and Johnny is not back from the fair with the blue ribbons.

MOTHER GOOSE

(*Turning*)

We must see to them.

TOMMY TUCKER

(*Singing softly*)

" Come to the window — my baby with me —
And look at the stars — that shine in the sea —"

MOTHER GOOSE

(*As she turns, with* SIMON)

Come in, Tommy Tucker. Come in. It is almost time for the Man in the Moon to come down —

(MOTHER GOOSE, *with* SIMON *on one side, and*

MARY *bearing a tray of dishes, on the other, turns to go slowly out of the garden. The twilight deepens.*)

MARY

And the poor wayfarers out in the woods —

MOTHER GOOSE

They will find wisdom by the way —

SIMON

And our garden will be alone in the dark —

MOTHER GOOSE

The Fountain of Youth will watch over it —

(*They go slowly towards the arbor. Little* TOMMY TUCKER *comes in through the gate, slowly, and still singing follows them. A big round moon rises behind the trees, and the tip of the fountain glitters silver in its light.*)

TOMMY TUCKER

(*Singing*)

"There are two little stars — that play bo-peep —
With two little fish,— far down in the deep.
And two little frogs — cry-neap-neap-neap —"

(MOTHER GOOSE, *and* SIMON *and* MARY, *disappear through the arbor,* TOMMY TUCKER *follows, his voice lingering after he has gone.*)

"There are two little stars — that play bo-peep —
And I see a dear baby — that should be asleep —"